

R E M A R K S

O N A S E R M O N

O F T H E L A T E

REV. JOHN WESLEY, K

E N T I T L E D

“ The Almost Christian : ”

WITH ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS.

BY A MEMBER OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

D U B L I N :

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R E M A R K S

ON A B E R M O N

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THE Reader will readily believe that the first part of the following work was not originally intended for publication. The Sermon which gave rise to it the Author heard frequently quoted and recommended by Methodists; and it was more than once put into his hands, accompanied with the remark that it set forth the truth: but as it appeared to him in a very different light, he undertook to shew to a few individuals of their community the uncharitable tendency of its doctrine, and its opposition to scripture and reason. His remarks on a subject so important and so little understood, which proved satisfactory to a few, he conceived might be of general use; and to answer this purpose more effectually, he saw there

was a necessity for some additional observations, to strengthen the conclusions of the first part, and to render them more universal.

This Work made its first appearance when the late Mr. Wesley's advanced time of life rendered it unlikely that he should take any public notice of it. Yet the Author was induced to publish it under this evident disadvantage, as he judged the best time to set on foot an investigation of Mr. Wesley's doctrines was, while Methodists were united in faith and discipline. Such a juncture was favourable to candid discussion, for they could immediately join issue with their opponents on the merits of their doctrine, instead of both parties idly contending about the questions to be debated. In yielding then to this consideration the Author could not be charged with unmanly proceeding, since if he advanced any thing false, or if he were defective in his reasoning, Methodists had many persons among them who wanted neither the ability nor the inclination to expose him.

The Author has been careful to introduce no question but what may be fully decided by the Scriptures and common sense, without any reference to the history or character of Methodists. He has accordingly confined himself to the discussion of their doctrines, and has avoided all personal arguments, which have generally proved the disgrace of religious controversy, and which besides are never conclusive with the opposite party, when they chuse to deny any pointed assertion, or to controvert the representation of facts. And while he attempts to refute their doctrines, he professes himself actuated solely by a love of truth, and by the consideration of the importance of right opinions in order to produce right practice. He disavows the intention of hurting the feelings of any individual, and particularly disclaims the most distant idea of intolerance. He is a zealous advocate for giving men of all persuasions full liberty of worshipping God according to their consciences, under a decided conviction that this would be the most effectual means to advance the cause of truth. None but knavish bigots pretend to
trace

trace to a divine origin the restraints on opinion, which the secular power has assumed to impose in almost all christian countries. Those restraints, so far from being of divine institution, are entirely inconsistent with the Gospel; and if this were not sufficiently clear, their unhappy effects prove them to proceed from *the rulers of the darkness of this world*; for the corruptions of Christianity and the confined sphere of its influence have been more owing to the persecuting spirit of its pretended defenders than to any other cause. But it is pleasing to indulge the hope that the time is approaching, when the prevailing party in every State will no longer consider it a dangerous policy to do justice to all mankind, to love mercy, and to have an humble reliance for the event of this conduct on the Providence of God. Then, and not before, if we have a right Faith in the Gospel, can we expect to see 'peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety' universally 'established.' It is indeed astonishing to consider how long the world has been so blind, as not to see what a wicked libel it is on the divine religion of Christ

Christ, to prop it up by inquisitions and penal statutes. If our zeal prompt us to transgress the sacred principles of Justice and Mercy, it becomes diabolical. It is true, all Christians *should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints*^a; but the only way, in which Scripture or Charity will suffer us to act thus, is in the use of a qualification required by St. Paul from all who were to become Overseers in the Church, that of being able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers^b.

Vicars

^a Jude 3.

^b Tit. i. 9.

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the sacred principles of Justice and Mercy, it
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should carefully consider the true ends
of the Law, and the only way, in
which obedience to Christ will lead us to
the attainment of the end of redemption to
which we are bound. But those who were to
become Obedient in the Church, that of her
ing into the world, should have been to exert, and

to preserve the peace.

R E M A R K S, &c.

THERE are none of Mr. Wesley's works more admired by his followers, which they have been more industrious to disperse, or of which he himself had a higher opinion, than his Sermon under the title of "The Almost Christian." A few remarks therefore upon the doctrine of this sermon must be acceptable to all persons who wish to become acquainted with his principles, and to be enabled to determine concerning them according to truth and reason.

This mode of trying his doctrines by examining a particular part of his works has many advantages over a systematical examination of them at large; for it admits of closer reasoning and less evasion, and saves the trouble of an almost endless number of quotations. Besides, the generality of readers can much better see the justice and conclusiveness of what is said on such a part of his works as lies immediately before their eyes, than they could understand the general refutation of his system, of which they may have but a confused notion, and concerning which they would not be secure from the fear of being imposed upon by misrepresentation without a laborious research.

All his peculiar tenets are comprised or glanced at in this sermon, of which the following is the substance. He holds, that before we can be in favour with God, we must have a supernatural con-

B **viction**

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 viction of his wrath abiding on us. Next to this he maintains it to be indispensably necessary to salvation, that we should be sensible of a direct impression from the Holy Spirit, witnessing to us our pardon and the favour of God. He farther contends, that every person who has this impression is perfect, and that every person who has it not, is in a state of damnation^a. For the support of these opinions is the sermon before us calculated; but I believe it will appear to every judicious person, on a slight examination, that they are assumed and asserted in it, without the smallest degree of proof; and perhaps, in the course of our examination of this sermon, we shall discover all those opinions to be fundamentally erroneous.

In the first place, he assumes a meaning from his text, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*,"^b which it will not bear. At best it could furnish him with nothing but a sound of words to prefix to his discourse; for their true and obvious meaning is foreign to his purpose. Agrippa did not call himself an almost Christian: he certainly was no such person according to Mr. W's. sense of the expression, nor could he properly be deemed one; for it does not appear that he ever professed Christianity, and his life was very unbecoming that of a good Christian^c. If a profligate,

^a Some persons may be unwilling to allow that the last is one of his tenets: yet numberless passages in his writings might be quoted, if requisite, wherein this doctrine is positively taught. In the first part of his Farther Appeal, (4th ed. p. 6), after giving it as his opinion that the witness of our pardon from the Spirit can be no other than instantaneous; yet he contends not for a circumstance, but, says he, "only see that you do attain it, for if you fall short, you perish everlastingly." In his first Appeal, and in many passages too numerous to recite, he says, "Faith (that is, the witness) is not given to any one but to that person who is all ungodly and unholy; who, till the moment he received it, was fit only for everlasting destruction."

^b Acts xxvi. 28.

^c Juvenal, his cotemporary, relates of him, Barbarus incestu dedit hunc Agrippa Sorori.

gate, on hearing a good discourse, should declare to the preacher of it, that he was almost persuaded by him to live well, no one would conclude from hence either that he was an almost good-liver, or that he intended to call himself one. This case is exactly parallel to the one before us: therefore the appellation of "an almost Christian," cannot be proved to be scriptural from the text: and if not, Mr. W. has chosen one which bears no relation to his subject.

Nor is it to be supposed it was St. Paul's intention, in his reply to Agrippa, to call himself an altogether or perfect Christian, for he never considered himself as being *already perfect*^d; but he wished that all who heard him *were not only in a small degree, but also in a high degree such as he was*^e: that is, that they were as thoroughly convinced of the truth of christianity as he was, and lived suitably to it, at least as much as he did. The context requires no more than this; and if more was intended, St. Paul must have prayed that all who heard him should be afflicted with a grievous temptation; for beside his *bonds*, he had a *continual thorn in the flesh*^f.

Mr. W. has taken no pains to illustrate his text, but we see his construction of it by the inference he draws from it; which is made thus in the second sentence of his sermon "Seeing it avails nothing before God to go only thus far, it highly imports us to consider first, what is implied in being an almost, secondly, in being an altogether Christian." Every part of this sentence is objectionable. It is not true in all cases that it avails nothing before God to be only almost persuaded to be a Christian, for every good disposition must avail a man something; and such an almost persuasion may, in many cases, be the result of a disposition or wish to embrace truth; and whether this

B 2

persuasion

^d Phil. iii. 12.

^e και εν ολιγω και εν πολλω.

^f 2 Corin. xii. 7, 8, 9. Gal. iv. 14.

persuasion can avail or not is no reason why it is of importance to consider what is implied in being an almost and an altogether Christian. To make his reason consistent, he should have said 'seeing it avails nothing before God to be an almost Christian, it highly imports us to consider what is implied in being one: and no doubt it is thus he wished his hearers should understand him. And farther, those terms "almost and altogether Christian" are so new to us, and the former in particular is of such uncertain signification, that he should not have obtruded them on us, without first ascertaining their authority.

Thus, his first setting out gives us no favourable opinion of his whole subject; for it is not likely that a structure built so hastily, on so weak a foundation, can have either beauty or strength. Perhaps we shall be confirmed in this Idea, when we shall have considered the character of the almost and of the altogether Christian, with the extraordinary distinction made between them, and the ground of it.

The character which he gives the former is so excellent, that we should imagine he had mistaken the order he had prescribed himself, and had begun with a description of the altogether Christian; for he appears to represent, in the first place, the perfection of christian piety and virtue. The character of the other, though very high strained, does not command our admiration in near an equal degree; for it appears inferior to the former, so far as piety and virtue in Idea, are inferior to the same, exemplified by a good and useful life. But the surprising difference which we shall find between the two is not in their moral qualities, but in their fortune. One shall have intuitive evidence of the divine favour, while the other is not in a state of salvation. He labours to give the former this pre-eminence in the second part of his sermon, and the doom of the

the other is pronounced near the conclusion. He passes a solemn declaratory sentence on the almost christian in these words: "The God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love," (meaning by faith a direct perception from the Spirit of the forgiveness of sins; and by love an experimental impression of the love of God) "*good it were for him that he had never been born^f.*" This is the sentence held out to the traitor Judas, as a warning against his intended treachery. In this place he decidedly excludes the almost christian from the kingdom of heaven; for it is his peculiar characteristic to want those impressions, at the same time that he is to be deficient in no other respect.

What can justify this sentence? It cannot be urged that Mr. W. illustrates his theory hypothetically, by putting an imaginary case, the real existence of which is not to be expected; for he says he was himself, at one time, that extraordinary person who went "so far for many years," as to the perfection he attributes to the almost Christian. If he had died then, on his own account he could not have been saved: yet in that state which he describes as a damnable one, he might, in opposition to St. Paul's opinion, have challenged justification by his works^g.

Let us consider a little more fully the character of this person, who is thus shut out from the kingdom of heaven, and consequently delivered over to weeping and gnashing of teeth. He is superior in Christian piety and virtue to all persons whatsoever since the Son of God made his appearance in the world; for he appears to stand in no need of repentance for any bad action committed, for any good one omitted, or for any remissness whatsoever in the performance of duty.

The

^f Matt. xxvi. 24. Mark xiv. 21.

^g Rom. iii. 20, 27. Gal. ii. 16.

The almost Christian is indued with all the negative virtues. "He is honest and true in all his dealings. He does nothing which the Gospel forbids; he sweareth and curseth not; he profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned. He not only avoids all actual adultery and fornication, but every word and look that tend thereto. He avoids all idle words and detraction; all conversation that is not good, to the use of edifying. He abstains from excess" in eating and drinking. "He avoids all strife and contention. He avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. He is no railer, brawler, or scoffer at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. He does not hurt or grieve any man; but in all things acts and speaks by that plain rule—whatsoever thou wouldst not he should do unto thee, that do not thou unto another."

In the next place, he is endued with all the positive virtues. "He has the form of godliness prescribed in the gospel of Christ. He labours with all his might to promote the good of all men, of friends and enemies, of their souls as well as their bodies. He reproves the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. He labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God has already awakened to the fountain opened for washing away sin; and to excite them to adorn the Gospel of Christ in all things."

"He uses all the means of grace, and at all opportunities; his whole deportment speaks nothing presuming, nothing else, but *God be merciful to me a sinner.*"

Farther he does all this with "sincerity," and is actuated with a "sincere view of" pleasing God in all things." Sincerity of design runs through the whole tenor of his life; this is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining

“ abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances
“ of God.”

And now, how is our astonishment excited when we see it insinuated, even under the merciful dispensation of the gospel, that all those endeavours “ avail
“ nothing before God ;” when we see it positively asserted in a solemn asseveration, wherein the Almighty is called to be a witness, that as the almost Christian is still supposed to be destitute of certain impressions from the spirit, “ good it were for him
“ that he had never been born !”

We are now to consider what has been said of the altogether Christian. This title is of great importance, for it implies perfection; yet Mr. W. makes no attempt to justify it, but assumes it without proof, “ If it be inquired,” says he, “ what
“ more is implied in being altogether a Christian?
“ I answer, first, the love of God——Such a love
“ ——as employs the utmost extent of all the faculties of the soul. Secondly, the love of our
“ neighbour——and one thing more——which is
“ faith.” Certainly a man must be perfect in all these respects, before he can be an altogether Christian; but how can it be implied from our granting this, that there is any such person? The Scriptures exhort us to love God with all our heart and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves; but they no where say that any man does or can act thus in perfection; but in a number of places they say the direct contrary^h. And as for “ faith,” the very notion of it in the Bible implies imperfectionⁱ. There may be perfect knowledge of some things; but perfect faith or belief is an improper expression. In the next state there will be no such thing as faith, for it will be succeeded by perfect vision. When he

^h 2 Chron. vi. 36. Psalm ciii. 14. cxxx. 3. cxliii. 2. Prov. xx. 9. Eccles. vii. 20. Matt. xix. 17. Luke xvii. 10. xviii. 19. Rom. iii. 20, 23. Gal. iii. 22. James iii. 2. 1 John i. 8.

ⁱ Rom. xii. 3. 1 Corin. xiii. 10, 12. 2 Corin. v. 7.

he describes more particularly the faith which is to constitute a man an altogether Christian; he, in the same manner as before, assumes in his premises what ought to be the conclusion. "Whosoever," says he, "has this faith, which purifies the heart — from all unrighteousness, from all *filthiness of flesh and spirit*." But the Apostles affirm of no man that he is purified from all unrighteousness, from all filthiness of flesh and spirit: they only exhort us to this purification¹. He goes on, whosoever has this faith, "which fills the heart with love stronger than death," &c. Here also he begs the conclusion. He concludes, "whosoever has this faith thus working by love, is not almost only, but altogether a Christian." By this assumption he has not advanced one step in proof of perfection, nor of the propriety with which the title which denotes it is applied to any man. For his method of proving there is such a person as an altogether Christian, is exactly the same as if he should say, "whosoever is perfect, is an altogether Christian."

In considering the title of an altogether Christian, we have already mentioned his peculiar qualifications:

¹ Here some persons have asked, "would our Saviour and his apostles have exhorted us in so many places to be perfect, if perfection was not attainable and necessary in this world?" To this we say, all exhortations to be perfect are in their nature exhortations to aim at perfection, which therefore do neither imply the necessity nor the possibility of our attaining to it. Our Saviour desires us to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matt. v. 48.) He knew it was impossible for any creature whatsoever to be thus perfect, and consequently he could not require it from mortal man; but he knew that we might aim at it, and that the more we should aim at it the nearer we should approach to it. Our Christian rule is in every instance perfect, worthy of a Divine Lawgiver, and leaves room for infinite approaches. It is no way inconsistent for Scripture to define this rule, and to exhort us to go on toward it; yet at the same time to affirm that all men fall short of it; and even to make a confession of our imperfection one of the conditions of our justification. (1 John i. 9.)

tions: these are, the love of God, and of his neighbour, and faith. Among the many strange assumptions we meet with, it is not the least surprising that he should make these *peculiar* to the altogether Christian. If we are to judge of the almost Christian's love of God by his works, which is the method of judging pointed out to us in Scripture, we must conclude he has this love in a very eminent degree. And to say that a man who labours to his utmost with sincerity, to do all manner of good to all men, to friends and enemies, to their souls and bodies, may still be without the love of his neighbour, is a contradiction. It cannot be insisted on that all the while he may be supposed to act without the grace of God, and consequently may be destitute of any devout or benevolent affections, notwithstanding all his performances; for this supposition is contrary to the Divine truth and goodness. If a man should be thus zealous and sincere in God's service, this implies that he must have the grace of God^k, and that God will give him *his holy Spirit*^l, for *he is faithful that hath promised*^m, who will undoubtedly grant him all necessary help here, and reward him eternally hereafter.

The almost Christian must therefore have a love of God and his neighbour, and it is equally certain that he must have faith. For that a man should regulate his conduct by the gospel of Christ, should inculcate all its precepts, and attend to all the means of grace with sincerity, and yet not have faith, sounds very surprising. Mr. W. has a short method of reconciling these contradictions. All love of God, of our neighbour, and all faith, according to him, are necessarily consequent on a direct perception of God's pardoning love; and this perception is the sum of all religion, every thing

^k John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^l Matt. vii. 11. Luke xi. 13.

^m Heb. x. 23.

thing short of which is sin, and merits everlasting destruction. As he will have this doctrine stand thus, let Scripture and reason say what they will; therefore his almost Christian has no love of God or his neighbour, no faith, and if he dies so, "good it were for him he had never been born."

Now though we should grant Mr. W. that he had experience of a direct witness of the love of God; still this does not necessarily imply his superiority in goodness to the almost Christian. For a perception of God's pardoning love is not goodness or holiness: and all the rapture and delight, supposed to flow from it, is of infinitely less moment in a state of probation than faith, hope, charity, or any Christian virtue. Considered in itself, it can neither add to the merit of any virtues which a man may have, nor can the want of it diminish from their excellence. But if we consider the effects to be expected from such a perception, when we suppose two persons arrived to an equal perfection in all Christian virtues, then he who has had least encouragement has certainly given the most acceptable proof of the sincerity of his obedience. Nor must we conclude that the degree of encouragement always points out the measure of God's approbation. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy and bring his sheaves with him^a. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth^b.* And even our blessed Lord was on some occasions exceedingly dejected^c. As therefore Mr. W.'s almost Christian is supposed to have least encouragement, if his virtues be equal to those of the other (and there cannot possibly be greater), his is the best character of the two.

Thus,

^a Psalm cxxvi. 6, 7.

^b Heb. xii. 6.

^c Matt. xxvi. 37. xxvii. 46. Luke xii. 50. John xii. 27.

Thus, though we should even grant that such a person did exist as one with the direct witness of his pardon, who for that reason is stiled an altogether Christian, yet we are under no necessity of allowing him to be a better man than the almost Christian; consequently to suppose him to such a degree better, that the other shall be so far distanced as to be in a damnable state, while he himself is saved, is extravagant.

We are next to consider the reason which Mr. W. assigns for making this extraordinary distinction between them.

If a man may be permitted upon any occasion to deal out judgments, they should be directed against the perpetrators of known wickedness, and against such as are positively condemned in the word of God. Does Mr. W. observe those self-evident rules? So far from it that he supposes the condemned Christian free from every thing which we call vice; and he does not attempt to shew where such a person is even mentioned in the word of God. The truth is, there is not so perfect a character drawn in the Bible, except one. He asserts, indeed, "I learn from the oracles of God, that "a man may go thus far," (that is, in all the virtues and graces already enumerated) "and yet be but almost a Christian." Though this point required the clearest proof, if ever any thing did, yet he contents himself with this simple assertion. If he could have given proof from Scripture, it is not to be supposed he would have omitted to do so. What now could possibly have suggested to him the idea of such an unaccountable being, as that of a man free from all vice, and endued with an extraordinary share of all Christian graces and virtues, yet still an almost Christian, and not only thus imperfect, but liable every instant to the pains of hell? Our wonder is not lessened when we are told it is his "Experience." When such astonish-
ing

ing and alarming doctrines are attempted to be proved by Experience, we expect to see a very exact and scriptural account of its nature, and the proof from it drawn by fair deductions. In both these expectations he disappoints us. As for the nature of his Experience, he leaves us to whatever previous idea we had formed of it; and his reasoning from it is still by simple assertion. "That it is possible to go thus far," says he, "and yet be but almost a Christian, I learn not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of Experience." And again, after describing the summit of virtue of which he had been in possession for many years, he says, "my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but almost a Christian." Beside those assertions, there is not in his whole sermon the shadow of a reason for the character of the almost Christian, for his condemnation, or for the propriety of the expression. But though he has contended himself with simply asserting his Experience, yet it appears necessary for us to inquire very fully into the nature and merits of this argument, of which he makes such an important use.

As he does not tell us here what he means by Experience, we must therefore collect it from his other writings. In them we read of a two-fold Experience, which has already been described when we spoke of his peculiar doctrines: first, a supernatural conviction of the wrath of God; and next, a direct impression from the Holy Spirit, witnessing to him his pardon. From his fancying he had this conviction, at a time when he was conscious of every Christian virtue, he has acquired his idea of an almost Christian; and he beheld also in himself a model for the altogether Christian when he flattered himself with the other impression. He meant we should understand him thus, if he had any meaning at all; and if so, he appears involved in a curious circle; for Experience, as above described, is the peculiar

particular doctrine he teaches, and it is also the means by which he attempts to prove it.

But if his doctrine were scriptural or sound, he need not have been reduced to defend it by an argument, the bare mention of which gives us just reason to suspect him of fanaticism. For Experience has been the plea of every Fanatic in every age, both in the Heathen and Christian world; and Hypocrites have equally pretended to it. It is easy to see why this plea has been so generally adopted. A man who believes or says he has direct revelation to guide him, is not to be confuted, though his absurd fancies should be exposed ever so palpably; such a pretence is therefore a most convenient substitute for argument, for it will answer any man's purpose, as it will require neither judgment nor learning to enforce it, nor any higher qualification than obstinacy. Accordingly we find that the Heretics, in the first ages of christianity, maintained their heresies by asserting their Divine Illumination. Hence the schisms and heresies of Gnostics and Montanists. The same pretensions to divine illumination contributed to the establishment of all the superstition of Popery. There was no innovation attempted which had not its inspired projectors, and inspired advocates. The numerous sects which disgraced the reformed religion above a century ago, pretended they had the witness of the Spirit for their contradictory fancies. Since the Apostles days, we have not heard of any man or set of men, remarkable for their claim to divine communications, who have not maintained opinions contrary to scripture, and by far the greatest part of them were noted enthusiasts and hypocrites. We can see plainly enough through their weakness or hypocrisy; and yet Mr. W. is not deterred by their example, but lays equal claim to spiritual Experiences; and he farther produces this claim as unexceptionable proof of strange doctrines, that is, of the Experiences

ences themselves, though it has been the most fertile source or error in the christian world.

But he has often said, " the false pretensions to Experience of some persons, is no argument against other persons having real Experience." It is probable the generality of his readers look upon this sophistry as equal to demonstration; because we cannot deny the proposition. Nothing, it is true, can be a conclusive argument against what really exists; but in this case, real existence should be proved, not taken for granted. When it is said that Millions have mistaken the flights of their own imaginations for spiritual Experiences; and that no man since the Apostles days has given satisfactory evidence of his having revelations from the spirit; then, says he, " all this proves nothing against real Experience." A lunatic, who believed he lived in the clouds, might defend his belief of his imaginary residence, just as conclusively, by the same argument. My Experience convinces me, he might say, that I live in the clouds, and since this fact is thus proved, therefore it can never be confuted by the falsehood and vanity of the same kind of notion or pretence in any other person.

By this sort of reasoning Methodists will never convince us of the reality of their Experience; but they should prove by miracles, as the Apostles did, that they are commissioned by God, and have received revelations from him. And when we consider how St. Paul prophesies of Antichrist, that he should appear with *all deceiveableness and lying wonders*^p; therefore we cannot be convinced by such tricks as impose on Popish credulity, but will expect at least to see the dead raised to life. Yet even miracles of this magnitude will not be sufficient, unless they can reconcile their pretended oracles with scripture; for we are desired by St. Paul, *if an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine than he taught,*

taught, to hold him accused^a: and if St. Paul preached the same doctrine with the other inspired writers, the same respect is confessedly to be paid them. When they prove their doctrine consistent with scripture, and support it by miracles, it will then be incumbent on them to shew that it is more than can be learned from scripture, or we stand in no need of their revelations. Those are the means by which they should prove their experience to be real, and an authorised rule for the direction of mankind; and until all this is done, it would betray the most contemptible weakness to embrace their opinions, for the sake of any assertion of Experience: especially as those opinions seem directly calculated to drive us into despair or madness; and according to which, viewed even with their own eyes, we must pass sentence of condemnation on ten thousand of our fellow-creatures for one we acquit; but viewed in their true light, we must send the whole race of mankind to perdition.

Mr. W. himself allows, that such an assent, without farther evidence, would not be well founded. For in a sermon on the witness of the Spirit, he admits the objection would be good if it were true, that "the direct witness only asserts but does not "prove any thing:" but he endeavours thus to remove the objection, "by two witnesses shall every "word be established; and when the Spirit witnesses with our Spirit," then he supposes there is full proof by two witnesses. But how has the Spirit borne witness to his Experience? We have no other proof of this but his own testimony. Some of his advocates will say, 'when a man's character for truth is undoubted, then, when he asserts that he has Experience, which implies the witness of the Spirit, we must look on this assertion as equivalent with two witnesses.' But no man's character for truth can be equal to that of our blessed Lord, who
says,

says, *If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true*, that is, it has not the stamp and evidence of truth. In another place he thus addresses the Jews, *It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me*. But they say again, 'when there is not one person only, but a great multitude who bear witness of their Experience, then sure their witness put together must be equal to two witnesses.' By no means, for numbers cannot alter the nature of the case. If ever so many should assert that one man had Experience, yet while they assert this on that person's testimony only, there is still no more than his single witness to his Experience. And if numbers should assert their own experience; yet, while in every particular case we can discover but one witness, a number of such cases is of no signification, as there is not one in which the requisite testimony can be produced. 'However, may there not be two competent witnesses, that of the Spirit and a man's own, by which he may be convinced that he himself has real Experience?' This no doubt is possible, because *all things are possible with God*; yet it is past our comprehension, how a Methodist can have two witnesses for his fancied Experience. He thinks he enjoys a "demonstrative, divine and supernatural evidence or spiritual sensation, where-
"by he discerneth God and the things of God". Therefore his own knowledge is absolute, and it would be as absurd for him to say, the Spirit witnesses to him the certainty of what he knows already by intuition, as it would be for one to say—A person standing by witnesses to me, that I see the book lying before my eyes. But so far from seeing proof that any person has two witnesses of such exalted Experience, we have no reason to think that any

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¹ John v. 31.

² John viii. 17, 18.

³ Earnest Appeal, pages 2, 3.

any direct revelation whatsoever is now either necessary for salvation, or the privilege of a christian; for there is not in the whole Bible the slightest intimation of the kind; and there is no imaginable way to distinguish all the late pretensions to it from downright enthusiasm.

It is certainly incumbent on every Methodist, who thinks he has Experience, to consider what ground of assurance he has for it, more than a confessed Enthusiast may have. It will not be denied that there are, and have been many Enthusiasts; and those too, with much appearance of sanctity. If now he should judge by the intenseness of his raptures and delights, the Enthusiast has the same; and besides, he then judges by effects, which at best can only influence his belief; and this belief is quite distinct from an intuitive knowledge of the Spirit. If he should judge by his devotion and good works, these are likewise distinct effects, and common to both; though indeed the Enthusiast has often considered those works as very good, which sober men have thought very shocking. If good works be a proof of Experience, Mr. W. must have enjoyed it when he was an almost Christian; that is, at a time when he allows he had no such thing. If Methodists should decline all reasoning and inference, and should boldly declare they are conscious of their Experience, the Enthusiast is equally confident, advances his claim with the same appearance of truth, and is with the same difficulty refuted. Thus they cannot have even an internal certainty that they are not Enthusiasts; and they could as soon raise a dead man to life, as they could prove their Experience to a reasonable person.

If any one should still contend that the simple assertion of his Experience is a divine authority, he must assume more to himself than ever did Christ or his Apostles. Our Lord expects not implicit faith. *The works that I do, says he, in my Father's name,*
C
they

they bear witness of me^u. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not^w. Nay, the presumption of those who demand, and the weakness or perverseness of those who yield implicit faith is the more surprising, since Christ in express words condemns it. *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive^x.* God bore witness to the Apostles also by enabling them to perform the same kind of works; nor do they rely on these alone, but they invite men to prove their doctrines, and try the spirits. As they gave miraculous proofs of their being commissioned by God; and as the gospel which they preached had all the internal marks of being divine, they justly require men to submit to them as unto God. Let us consider how far Mr. W's attestations and his doctrines entitle him to the same respect.

He relates a number of wonderful transactions, in most of which he was himself the principal agent, and his journals abound with strange stories and accounts of prodigies. But all these are so far from proving his divine mission, that his warmest advocates endeavour as much as possible to elude all enquiries about them; and wish he had been more sparing of them. In fact, these stories and wonders are too silly to be recorded by a man of liberal education. They must injure a good cause, while they may greatly promote a bad one; for they lay a sure foundation for superstition in weak minds, on which the superstructure will be, whatever a zealous and assuming teacher pleases. It is hard to suppose he could have been so weak as to believe all those himself. Why then has he published them? With a view, we must suppose, of exciting in our imaginations such confused apprehensions of spirits, devils, and supernatural appearances, as shall interest all the superstitious and enthusiastic propensities of our nature

* John x. 25.

^w x. 37.^x v. 43.

nature in favour of his wonderful doctrines. It may be pleaded that his intentions were good when he endeavoured by this means to rouse men, and to work on their imaginations; but it is certainly wrong, knowingly to lead men into error, or to suffer it, that good may come; if it is possible for any one to conceive that any good purpose could be answered by quitting *the words of truth and soberness*¹ and calling our attention to *old Wives' Fables*.

Perhaps he was aware of the insufficiency of these stories to demonstrate his divine mission, for he has not openly appealed to them; but leaving them to work their own way in making some chance impression, he generally has recourse to Experience; and this he maintains is an extraordinary miracle. And truly it does sound a little miraculous, that men should now enjoy a privilege not once promised in the gospel; and which we have no account, to be depended upon, that any one enjoyed since its publication. But what opinion must that man have of our understanding, or what must be his own, who appeals to his own imagination, requiring, that what he asserts passes therein should be considered a miraculous attestation to his doctrine? When he proves his Experience, it will be time enough to consider how far it is miraculous. And yet, on Mr. W.'s principles, why should the highest degree of experience be deemed a miracle? It is so far from being out of the course of nature, that by his account, it is the stated and only condition of justification from the beginning of christianity to the end of it.

The number and zeal of his disciples is often appealed to as an evident proof of a divine interposition: yet numbers of his most zealous partisans are continually falling off from his opinions and society, whose former pretensions to Experience have been just as strong, as the pretensions of those who adhere

C 2

to

¹ Acts xxvi. 25.² 1 Tim. iv. 7.³ 2 Tim. iv. 4.

to him. Nothing now seems so unaccountable, or so little short of a miracle, as that a number of men, or that any man who had once an intuitive sight of the Deity or any direct revelation, should afterwards have a doubt concerning it. It will be said, these persons never had real experience. They certainly had not such as they pretended to; yet they had credit for it with Methodists; and were just as well entitled to credit as any of their number.

But this argument proves too much, for if a man might call the number and zeal of his converts a miraculous attestation to his religion, Mahommed would have more reason to boast than Mr. W. though the latter had experienced no defection.

If it appears now that he has produced no miraculous attestation to his Experience, we are under no obligation to submit to him as to one commissioned by God. All that is incumbent on us, is to enquire what his peculiar doctrine really is; and if, on a fair examination, it should not appear agreeable to reason and scripture, we are at liberty to reject it totally.

We have already seen what is his peculiar doctrine; one part of which is, that without a direct sight of God and knowledge of our salvation, we do every thing to merit everlasting destruction. It is to be supposed the reader will have small hesitation in rejecting such strange opinions. It is contrary to our ideas of infinite justice and goodness, that God should consign those to misery, whom he does not endue with this sight and knowledge; for neither reason nor scripture inculcates their necessity; and in fact, as far as they can relate to us, they are not once spoken of in the whole word of God^a.

It has now been shewn that a claim of spiritual Experience is a very suspicious argument—that it has done incredible mischief—that it can have no authority unless supported by miracles—that even
miracles

^a The proof of this assertion will appear hereafter.

miracles will not support it if it be contrary to Scripture—that Mr. W.'s claim is not supported by miracles—and that it is produced to prove a doctrine not to be reconciled with God's attributes. If all this be true, and it is not easy to imagine how any part of it can be controverted, then not only is the character and distinguishing properties of the almost Christian built on the most visionary grounds, but farther, Mr. W.'s whole system falls to nothing; for Experience is the *means* by which he endeavours to establish his doctrine, and it is also the very doctrine to be established.

Nothing of any consequence remains now to be considered but his quotations from the Homilies, and those texts of Scripture which he produces as implying the faith of the altogether Christian. This faith is the direct knowledge of salvation, which includes in it the perfection of all religion. If none of his quotations prove the necessity of such a surprising faith, and if no other quotations can possibly do so, it must then appear that he has fallen into a most unhappy mistake, in condemning those who are not condemned in the word of God.

His quotation from the Homilies is taken from the third part of the sermon on the salvation of man. The words there are ' The right and true
' Christian faith is not only to believe that holy
' Scripture, and all the aforesaid articles of our faith
' are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises to be saved
' from everlasting damnation by Christ: whereof
' doth follow a loving heart to obey his command-
' ments—— How can a man have this true faith,
' this sure trust and confidence in God, that by
' the merits of Christ his sins be forgiven, and he
' reconciled to the favour of God, and to be partaker of the kingdom of heaven by Christ, when
' he liveth ungodly.' Here the question is not, whether faith be defined with a critical exactness,
but

but whether the definition imply a direct revelation. The writer of the Homilie appears to describe rather an effect of a genuine faith which worketh by love, than faith itself. But even so, it requires no long consideration to see, that a trust and confidence in God's promises can never signify an absolute knowledge of their completion.

In Mr. W.'s quotation from this place he has an idea which has nothing corresponding to it in the original, "Faith is a trust and confidence which a man hath with God." What does he mean by saying "with God?" It is nonsense or presumption. It means that the man who has this faith is the confident of God, or it means nothing.

Besides this, he omits 'in God's merciful promises,' and thereby alters the face of the whole passage. This omission would insinuate that our trust and confidence to be saved is independent on any conditions, and on any regard to the persons and things in which we trust and confide: whereas God's promises are all conditional, and will be extended to none but *to those who seek for honour, glory, and immortality by patient continuance in well-doing.* We must be conscious of a sincere endeavour to fulfil this condition, before we can have a well-founded trust and confidence in God's promises to be saved through the merits of Christ. If, therefore, there had been nothing positively mentioned, which would imply this condition, it must have been implied notwithstanding, to render the book of Homilies consistent with itself, with Scripture, and common sense.

Faith is defined in this Homilie only occasionally, with a view to answer an objection; but in the next Homilie on Faith, it is twice expressly defined; and our trust and confidence are made to depend on many conditions. Thus we read therein—
 'Faith — is a true trust and confidence of the
 'mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 'and a steadfast hope all good things to be received at
 'God's

‘ God’s hand : and that although we through in-
 ‘ firmity or temptation of our ghostly enemy do fall
 ‘ from him by sin ; yet if we return again unto
 ‘ him by true repentance, that he will forgive and
 ‘ forget our offences for his Son’s sake our Saviour
 ‘ Jesus Christ, and will make us inheritors with
 ‘ him of his everlasting kingdom ; and that in the
 ‘ mean time, until that kingdom come, he will be
 ‘ our protector and defender in all dangers what-
 ‘ soever do chance : and that though sometime
 ‘ he doth send us sharp adversity, yet that evermore
 ‘ he will be a loving Father unto us, correcting us
 ‘ for our sins, but not withdrawing his mercy finally
 ‘ from us, if we trust in him, and commit our-
 ‘ selves wholly unto him, hang only upon him,
 ‘ and call upon him, ready to obey and serve him.
 ‘ This is the true lively and unfeigned Christian
 ‘ faith.’ The other account of Faith is as follows,
 ‘ The very sure and lively Christian Faith is, not
 ‘ only to believe all things of God which are con-
 ‘ tained in holy Scripture, but also is an earnest
 ‘ trust and confidence in God, that he doth regard
 ‘ us, and that he is careful over us, as the father
 ‘ is over the child whom he doth love, and that
 ‘ he will be merciful unto us for his only Son’s
 ‘ sake, and that we have our Saviour Christ our
 ‘ perpetual advocate and priest, in whose only
 ‘ merits, oblation and suffering, we do trust that
 ‘ our offences be continually washed and purged,
 ‘ whensoever we (repenting truly) do return to him
 ‘ with our whole heart, stedfastly determining with
 ‘ ourselves, through his grace, to obey and serve
 ‘ him in keeping his commandments, and never
 ‘ to turn back again to sin.’ —How different are
 these definitions of Faith from Mr. W.’s account of
 it ? Is it said in any of those places, that Faith is
 instantaneously given to that person only, who, till
 the moment he received it, did every thing to de-
 serve everlasting destruction ; and that from that
 instant a man has not only an unconditional and
 self.

self-sufficient trust and confidence of his salvation, but an intuitive direct knowledge of it, and a sight of God?

Thus his quotation, even with the assistance of his own moulding, does not contain his account of Faith. Trust and confidence are not qualities independent and self-sufficient, of a like nature with instinct; but a trust and confidence in God's promises and in his mercy that he will forgive us through the merits of Christ, is an act of Faith, the result of reflection. And from what reflection it proceeds may be seen in this Homilie on Faith, where the words of St. John are quoted—*'Hereby we are certified that we know God, if we observe his commandments. He that saith, he knoweth God, and observeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him'. Hereby we know that we be of the truth, and so we shall persuade our hearts before him—For if our hearts reprove us, God is above our hearts, and knoweth all things—well beloved if our hearts reprove us not, then we have confidence in God, and shall have of him whatsoever we ask, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that please him'*.

We meet with frequent mention in the Homilies of trust and confidence in God's mercy, and earnest hopes of future reward; but never of the necessity of any immediate revelation. In many places they speak of the inspiration of the Spirit and his working in our hearts; yet nothing can be more plain than that they allude to the fruits of the Spirit;—such as *'his quickening the minds of men—stirring up godly motions in their hearts—giving patience and joyfulness—inspiring peace—the increase of faith and hope—inflaming our hearts with love—purifying the mind with his secret working—and if we have any gift where—'* by

^b 1. John. ii. 3, 4.

^c 1. John iii. 19, 20, 21, 22.

‘ by we may profit our neighbour, all is wrought
 ‘ by this one and self-same spirit.’ By such fruits
 we may believe we are inspired by God’s Holy
 Spirit. But the Homilies speak not a word about a
 direct perception of the Spirit, of our distinguish-
 ing between himself and the good dispositions which
 we attribute to his influence, of a witness from
 him pointedly declaring to us our salvation. And
 much less do they say that any knowledge of this
 kind is faith, which is essential to justification.

One quotation will render any farther vindication
 of the Homilies needless. ‘ But how shall I know
 ‘ that the Holy Ghost is within me?—As the tree
 ‘ is known by his fruit, so is also the Holy Ghost.
 ‘ The fruits of the Holy Ghost, according to the
 ‘ mind of St. Paul, are these; Love, joy, peace,
 ‘ long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness,
 ‘ meekness, temperance, &c. Contrariwise, the
 ‘ deeds of the flesh are these: adultery^d, &c. &c.
 ‘ ————— Here is now that glass, wherein thou
 ‘ must behold thyself, and discern whether thou
 ‘ have the Holy Ghost within thee, or the spirit of
 ‘ the flesh—If thou see that thy works be virtuous
 ‘ and good, consonant to the prescript rule of God’s
 ‘ word, favouring and tasting not of the flesh but
 ‘ of the Spirit, then assure thyself that thou art in-
 ‘ dued with the Holy Ghost; otherwise in thinking
 ‘ well of thyself, thou dost nothing else but deceive
 ‘ thyself.’

We are in the next place to consider Mr- W.’s
 quotations from Scripture.

Here let it be considered what I undertake to
 prove. If ever any of the inspired writers had Mr.
 W.’s faith, it must have been Moses and St. Paul,
 who were favoured with the sight and hearing of
 as much as man could see and hear. Moses saw
 in

^d Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

^e Homilie of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

in part the glory and goodness of the Lord, but he had not properly a sight of God; for God says upon the occasion, *No man shall see me and live*^f. St. Paul *was caught up into the third heaven*, where he *heard unspeakable words*^g; yet he had not an intuitive sight of the Deity, for he himself says, *Christ alone dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unnto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see*^h. And St. John says three times; *No man hath seen God at any time*ⁱ. Moses and St. Paul were thus highly favoured but once in their lives; but Mr. W. teaches that the object of our intuition must constantly be infinitely beyond their experience, or we cannot be in a state of salvation. In the second part of his Farther Appeal, he defines Faith thus:—"Faith is a loving obedient sight of a present and reconciled God." This is the same in substance with all his definitions of Faith; and without it he asserts constantly, "that we are altogether unholy and fit only for everlasting destruction." That this present sight of God, or any intuitive knowledge either of him or of our pardon, is not essential to justification, is all that I contend for. As it is his part to prove his faith, and as there can be no imaginable proof but from Scripture; if, therefore, it can be shewn, that his most favourite texts have no such meaning as he attributes to them, nothing farther can be wanting for the reader's satisfaction.

We see no reference to any text in Scripture, which can be supposed to imply a direct witness, until we come to his allusion to Romans v. 5. *because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*. It can make no very material difference in the signification of this verse, whether we understand the Apostle to

speak

^f Exodus xxxiii. 20.

^g 2 Corin. xii. 4.

^h 1 Tim. vi. 16.

ⁱ John i. 18. 1 John iv. 12, 20.

speak of God's love toward us, or of our love toward God. If he speaks of the first, the text will mean, 'Because God's love deeply affects our hearts, being proved by the Holy Ghost given unto us;' and if of the second—'because our hearts are deeply affected with love toward God, which affection is excited in us by the Holy Ghost.' The former interpretation agrees best with the context, and with the third verse after the text; and the other meaning will be implied of course, for to have our hearts warmed with a grateful sense of God's love to us must be considered as one of the fruits of the Spirit. The questions now to be resolved are, how did God's love affect the hearts of the first Christians? and how did the Holy Ghost prove God's love to them?

The first question requires no farther answer than St. John's observations. *We love him because he first loved us^k; and he who loveth God loveth his brother also^l: For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments^m.* Perhaps Methodists will say, the Holy Ghost imparted to them some faculties by which they had a direct sensation of God's attribute of love. According to this sense, the text would bewilder us in a metaphysical speculation impenetrably abstruse; and would be without a parallel in the whole Bible. That we should have a knowledge of the qualities or attributes of an intelligent Being, by any other mode than by judging from their effects, or by reasoning from analogy, is physically impossible; and must be so, while we remain in this world.

In answer to the other question we say, the Holy Ghost proved God's love toward the first Christians, by proving the Gospel. God's love to mankind is conspicuous in their redemption. St. Paul says in the third verse after the text, *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we*

were

^k 1 John iv. 19.

^l iv. 21.

^m v. 3.

were yet sinners Christ died for us. Agreeable to this St. John says, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*ⁿ—and again, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*^o. In those places it is declared that God's particular love to mankind appears in their redemption by Christ—and the manner by which the Holy Ghost proved this redemption was not by a direct revelation to each particular person, but by external signs, as appears to a certainty from a great number of places. Quoting all those places would swell these remarks beyond our proposed limits, but the reader is referred to a number of them^p, or he may look on the following as a specimen of the whole; *which (salvation) at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*^q.

The context puts it beyond a doubt that the Experience of a Methodist is not implied in the text: for the Apostle, after mentioning the good fruits, which the persons he addressed might reap from tribulation, concludes with *Hope*; and *Hope*, says he, *maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*. If now the Apostle calls their degree of persuasion by the term *Hope*, after the love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them, it is plain that he alluded to no direct knowledge or revelation of
God's

ⁿ 1 John iii. 16.

^o 1 John iv. 9.

^p Matt. iii. 16. xii. 28. Mark xvi. 20. John i. 33. Acts ii. 4, 22, 43. iv. 30. v. 12, 32. vi. 8. viii. 17. x. 44, 46. xi. 15. xiv. 3. xv. 8. xix. 6. Rom. xv. 18, 19. 1 Cor. ii. 4. xii. 4—11. 2 Cor. xii. 12. Heb. xii. 1. 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

^q Heb. ii. 4.

God's attributes ; for says he in the 8th chapter, *We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope ; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* This is as plain as any text in Scripture, and affords decisive proof that we are not saved by sight or any direct knowledge. There is no room for the evasion, that we may still see by spiritual senses, for *hope which is seen by any senses is not hope.* It cannot be said that hope is too insignificant a quality to be attributed to the influence of the Holy Ghost ; for St. Paul, in the 15th chapter, prays that men *may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* Nor still can it be pretended that we may obtain a higher dispensation than hope in this world, for St. Peter desires us to *hope to the end*. If now St. Paul, who was miraculously converted, who wrought miracles himself, was witness to many more, and was *caught up into the third heaven*, still calls his religion by the name of *Hope* ; how can any man pretend he is authorised by the same Apostle to call his own religion " Sight."

After alluding to this text, Mr. W. asks a number of questions, partly in his own, and partly in Scripture words ; but the ideas are exclusively his own ; and yet they cannot so properly be called Ideas, as equivocal insinuations—Thus he asks, " Can you cry out my God and my all ?" insinuating that we must have a direct knowledge of God's presence and favour ; yet these are neither the words of Scripture, nor do they convey determinately a Scripture Idea. In another question the insinuation is stronger, " Are you happy in God ?" The merit of this thought and expression rests entirely with himself

' 1 Pet. i. 13. See farther, Acts xxiii. 6. xxiv. 15. Rom. v. 2. xii. 12. xv. 4, 13. 1 Cor. xiii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 12. 1 Thess. i. 3. v. 8. Tit. i. 2. ii. 13. iii. 7. Heb. iii. 6. vi. 11, 18, 19. 1 Pet. i. 21. iii. 15.—Hope, which has salvation for its object, is mentioned in above forty places of the New Testament, each of which contains a decisive refutation of the doctrine of Methodists.

himself—"Is he your glory, your delight, your
"crown of rejoicing?" Here are a few Scripture
words, but how far he has retained the sense of
Scripture may be seen by reading the whole text.
St. Paul asks the Thessalonians, *For what is our Hope
or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the pre-
sence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye
are our glory and joy**.—"Is this commandment
"written in your heart, that he who loveth God
"loveth his neighbour also?" Perhaps he hints at
some peculiarity of his faith in those words, for he
seldom mentions the love of our neighbour, with-
out saying it is "written in our hearts." A law
written in our hearts implies nothing more than a
natural moral sense of good and evil. The ex-
pression occurs but once in Scripture, where St.
Paul says, *when the Gentiles which have not the law,
do by nature the things contained in the law, these
having not the law are a law unto themselves; which
shew the work of the law written in their hearts;
their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts
the mean while accusing or else excusing one another*†.
—"Dost thou believe that Christ loved thee and
"gave himself for thee?" Part of these words is
taken from St. Paul‡, who no doubt believed that
he in particular was interested in the benefits of
Christ's passion; which belief any one may have
who is conscious of his faith and obedience. But
the Scriptures speak not a word concerning any in-
ternal certain knowledge of the love and death of
Christ, while they often allude to the external ma-
nifestations of them. Hereby, says St. John, *per-
ceive we the love of God, because he laid down his
life for us**. And if any one should pretend that
he has now an internal sense demonstrating to him
that Christ suffered on the cross for our sins, he
deserves no serious answer.—"Hast thou faith in
"his

* 1 Thess. ii. 19. † Rom. ii. 15.
* Gal. ii. 20. † John iii. 16.

“his blood?” The answer to the last will serve for this question.—“Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away *thy* sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea?” There is no question of this sort in Scripture, nor any idea like it, if with Mr. W. we suppose that believing always means seeing. John the Baptist points to Christ, and says, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*¹: and the Prophet Micah foretells, speaking of the remnant of God’s Heritage, *thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*². Will it follow from hence that our sins will never be forgiven until we are directly informed so by the Holy Spirit?—“That he hath blotted out the hand-writing that was against *thee*, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross?” These indeed are for the most part Scripture words, but prove nothing to the purpose, as will be seen at once, when we supply what is wanting in the text. *Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*³. The ordinances were the ceremonies of the Jewish law^b, which Christ has abolished.—“Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of *thy* sins?” St. Paul’s words are, *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*^c. Will any one say the construction of St. Paul’s and Mr. W.’s words is the same? St. Paul’s words contain a general declaration that our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins are owing to the merits of the blood of Christ; and the conditions upon which these merits will be particularly applied to procure our forgiveness is abundantly declared in other places to be repentance and faith; but Mr. W.’s question would insinuate that each parti-

cular

¹ John i. 29.

² Micah vii. 19.

³ Col. ii. 14.

^b See verses 20, 21, 22. Ephes. ii. 14, 15, 16. Heb. ix. 1, 10.

^c Ephes. i. 7. Col. i. 14.

cular person should have a demonstrative knowledge that his own sins are forgiven. While Methodists fancy they have such a knowledge, or conceive it to be necessary, they will never judge of the goodness of their state *by their fruits*, for if they do not obtain it, they will conclude they are certainly under the wrath of God; and if they flatter themselves with having obtained it, they will consider it as implying good works in perfection; and their attempting then to strengthen themselves in the belief of their direct knowledge, by comparing their lives with the rules prescribed in the Gospel, would not only be superfluous and perhaps irksome, but would betray a distrust, which, according to their notions, must throw them back an infinite distance from justification.

None of these texts required any long vindication; but he has reserved for the last question a text which demands a thorough examination, as the cause of Methodism will stand or fall upon the decision of its meaning. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*^a.

In determining the sense of this or of any dubious text, we are not inconsiderately to adopt any literal meaning the words will bear; but we should keep in view the context and parallel places, and adopt the sense most agreeable to them. If this rule be not observed, the Bible or any book in the world may be reduced to absurdity and contradiction; but by attending to this rule, this text can be made as plain as any one in Scripture.

It is admitted, the Spirit itself is the Holy Ghost; but it is not the spirit of adoption mentioned in the former verse, as some persons contend. The spirit of adoption must signify a disposition, as spirit signifies in the parallel place to Timothy^c. It is opposed to the spirit of bondage, which is confessedly a dis-

^a Rom. viii. 16.

^c 2 Tim. i. 7.

a disposition; and cannot be the Holy Ghost, or he must also have been once the spirit of bondage, which is too absurd to be supposed. As then the spirit of adoption must be a disposition, it is not to be conceived how it can witness any thing along with our own spirit; for a disposition is a testimony of our own spirit; therefore it must be the Holy Ghost that witnesseth; and consequently the only things in this text concerning which there can be any question are—To whom did the Apostle mean that the Holy Spirit itself bore witness with their spirit? in what manner did the Spirit witness? and to what truth?

We are first to enquire to whom the Spirit had borne witness. Was it a witness perceivable by none but by those particular persons who were real Christians; or was it a witness in general to Christians, Jews and Gentiles, to all in short who would attend to it? The words in the original are *συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν* which literally mean, *beareth a joint witness with our own spirit*; consequently the same office is affirmed to be performed by the Spirit itself and by our Spirit, as if the text had been expressed thus—the Spirit itself beareth witness, and our Spirit beareth witness, that we are the children of God. That our Spirit beareth witness, means simply in Scripture language, that we bear witness. St. John desires us *not to believe every Spirit; but to try the Spirits, whether they are of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the world*. Now if the Apostle spoke good sense, it is impossible it could have been his meaning that no one can see or understand a competent witness to a certain truth or doctrine of Christianity except the parties themselves who bear witness. We must therefore understand this as we do every similar case. Thus the Apostles were the appointed witnesses.

ses of the Gospel. Our Saviour tells them, *ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*^s. And *The Lord worked with them*^b, and gave testimony to the word of his Graceⁱ. He joins the witness of his Apostles to that of the Holy Ghost. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father—he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning*^k. Hence it appears that the Holy Ghost and the Apostles were to bear witness of the Gospel to *all nations*^l. But they must have mocked mankind, if they said, the Holy Spirit and we ourselves bear witness to the Gospel, and yet no one but ourselves can see or understand this witness.

• We are, secondly, to enquire in what manner the Apostle meant that the Spirit beareth witness. There are but two ways, either by a direct internal revelation, or by external signs and wonders. The Roman Christians of those days had abundant instances of the latter witness, for the Apostle tells them he was *the minister of Christ—to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God*^m; consequently they did not obtain the former witness; for what could have been more unaccountably useless than those *mighty signs and wonders*, if they were promised a direct internal witness, and if they could not become real Christians without it? It appears likewise, from the nature of each witness, that St. Paul appeals in this place to the external one. For whether is it more likely that he should appeal for the proof of his assertion to the various gifts of the Spirit and the miracles at that time common; or to particular impressions on individuals,

^s Acts i. 8.

^b Mark xvi. 20.

ⁱ Acts xiv. 3.

^k John xv. 26, 27. ^l Acts xxvi. 16, 22, 23. ^l Rom. xvi. 26.

Col. i. 2, 3.

^m Rom. xv. 16, 18, 19.

als, of which those only who received them could have any conception? The first he might have done confessedly; but that he had any foundation for the latter must be an improbable conjecture: or if he had, his appealing to it could be attended with no manner of use. He could not by such means convey a new Idea to any one who had experienced the same witness; and to those who had not, he must bear witness of himself by appealing to his own Experience. To the latter therefore his assertion must have been utterly unsupported. That many of those whom the Apostle addressed were thus beyond the reach of this kind of argument must be acknowledged; for there were many Judaizing Christians among the Romans, as well as in all the churches, who, in effect, denied the truth of the Apostle's assertion, that they were the children of God; and who consequently could have no internal direct witness of it. This verse was occasioned by the mistakes of those men in particular, as will appear by considering, in the third place, to what truth the Spirit and the Apostles bore a joint witness.

This was, that Christians are *children of God*. Methodists will say, this expression signifies justified persons whose sins are forgiven, and who are in favour with God. It oftentimes has this meaningⁿ; yet it is not the particular Idea which the Apostle intended to convey when he said, there were two witnesses, that they were children of God.

D 2

ⁿ In Matt. v. 9, 45. Luke xx. 36. 1 John iii. 10. and in a few more places, Children of God does signify those who please him. But in those places, the humane, merciful and righteous conduct of good persons is the immediate subject, while God's paternal regard is only implied. In this place the case is reversed, with this difference, that the goodness of God does not necessarily produce and imply the best effect on persons endued with free will in a state of trial. Thus God is said to be *kind to the unthankful and to the evil*, (Luke vi. 35.) and to make his *Sun to rise on the evil and the good*. (Matt. vi. 45.) Our Saviour desires us to address God by the name of *Father*, which appellation all persons are entitled to use, though all are not justified.

It must be acknowledged a principal intention of St. Paul in this and more of his Epistles, was to oppose the error of those persons who would impose on Christians all the rites of the Mosaic law. In opposition to those perverters of Christianity, he insists on our Christian liberty in a number of places; and asserts that God exacts no slavish rites under the Christian dispensation as he did under the Jewish; but that he treats Christians as children. God, for wise and obvious purposes, had enjoined the perverse and stiff-necked Jews such burdensome ceremonies, that he appeared to them more in the light of a Task-master than a Father. For which reason St. Peter calls the ceremonial law *a yoke which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear*^o: St. Paul *a yoke of bondage*^p. *The Mosaic covenant, says he, gendereth to bondage*^q. He upbraids the Galatians with *desiring again to be in bondage, by turning again to the weak and beggarly elements*^r. On the other hand he maintains that we are *called unto liberty*^s; that we are *freed from the law* as from the first Husband now dead^t. And, says he, in the verse before the text, *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father*. That is, by the Gospel ye have not received the slavish spirit which operated by fear under the Jewish dispensation, but ye have received a liberal and ingenuous spirit or disposition, such as sons enjoy who look up to a kind and indulgent Father. Then follows the proof of this in the text. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit that we are children of God*^v.

Christians

^o Acts xv. 10. ^p Gal. v. 1. ^q iv. 24.

^r Gal. iv. 9. ^s v. 13. ^t Rom. vii. 3, 4.

^v The particle 'the' before *Children* is not in the original, which is simply *τὸν θεόν*. A person, ignorant of this circumstance, might consider this particle as peculiarly significant; whereas the whole argument points to *are* as the emphatic word. In the fore-

Christians were dealt with as children, not only in opposition to Jews, but to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had no revelation, nothing to direct them but the light of nature, and a very faint tradition. They were besides in *bondage to vanity and corruption*^w. They were *subject to bondage through fear of death*^x. From every view of their spiritual condition they did not appear to be favoured with the kind and fatherly treatment which Christians experienced. St. Paul's observation therefore is true with respect to them; but still that he had in view the state of the Jews in particular appears from the parallel place in his Epistle to the Galatians. Mr. W. himself, in his Sermon on this text, allows this place to be parallel; and in that case St. Paul's meaning is unquestionably such as has been stated. This will appear by comparing the two places at full length. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are Children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* The sense in which St. Paul means that we are children of God is ascertained beyond any doubt in the following passage. *Now I say that the Heir so long as he is a child differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father. Even so we when we were children were in bondage under the elements* of

going verse the Apostle reminds his readers that Christians are no longer subject to the yoke of Jewish ceremonies, to the observance of which the Jews were driven by the rod of temporal punishment; but that, by the publication of the Gospel, we have the assurance of being treated with the indulgence of Sons, which must draw from us suitable acknowledgments to our kind Father. That we ARE thus treated as Sons the Spirit itself witnesses along with our own Spirit.

^w Rom. viii. 20. 21.

^x Heb. ii. 15.

of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ^y.

If those places are parallel, children of God signifies in the text, those whom God treats as children; yet it does not follow from this but that they may still be undutiful. The Apostle wonders how the Galatians should be so soon removed unto another Gospel^z. He asks them, O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth^a. He is afraid of them, lest he should have bestowed upon them labour in vain^b. And yet he tells them, ye are no longer under a schoolmaster — For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus^c. Again he asks them, But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements^d. Here the paternal goodness of God is conspicuous, while the conduct of the Galatians was not answerable to it.

The verse following the text contains a farther proof that the Apostle used the expression, *Children of God*, as representing the general favoured state of Christians, without including the idea of their particular deserts, *And if children then Heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*. The Apostle concludes, that when we suffer with Christ we are Heirs of God, because he had before proved that we are children of God; so that these two expressions are not synonymous. Heirs in this
verse

^y Gal. iv. 1 to 8.

^z Gal. i. 6.

^a iii. 1.

^b iv. 11.

^c Gal. iii. 25, 26.

^d iv. 9.

verse confessedly signifies justified persons. Now let Methodists take their choice whether St. Paul appeals to an internal witness of the Spirit, or whether children of God signifies in this place justified persons; for they cannot maintain them both, without making the Apostle to argue childishly. If the Spirit gives internal witness that we are justified, it must also give internal witness that we are Heirs of God. But the Apostle infers that we are Heirs of God, from the consideration of our first being Children, and this only on a certain condition, *And if Children, then heirs — — — if so be that we suffer with Christ.* So that the Apostle is made to argue in this simple manner; the Spirit acquaints us by immediate revelation, that we are justified, and our own minds witness to us the same truth by a distinct consciousness; *and if we are justified, then we are justified, if so be that we suffer with Christ.*

Thus it appears, that though St. Paul had spoken of the Spirit's witnessing internally, yet we could have no ground for believing that he spoke of a direct internal witness of justification necessary for all Christians. The utmost which could then be inferred from this text would be, that the Apostle and some to whom he addressed himself, had a direct revelation that Christians were *not under the law but under grace*^e; that God had set aside the Mosaic covenant *which gendereth to bondage*^f, and *had translated them into the kingdom of his dear son*^g. But when we consider farther the utter improbability of his having appealed to the internal witness, and the moral certainty that he appealed to the external, then to maintain that he alluded to the former as the indispensable condition of Justification must betray the grossest ignorance of all the rules of right reason.

Mr. W. goes on still moulding scripture words to his purpose. "Let him not rest till he makes his

"goodness,

^e Rom. vi. 14.

^f Gal. iv. 24.

^g Col. i. 13.

“goodness to pass before thee, till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, &c.” This was a revelation granted to Moses, but where in scripture are we desired not to let God rest until he impart to us the same? Moses was the promulgator of a new law from God, performed miracles numerous, tremendous, was with God forty days in the mount, fasted the whole time, and declares that the Saviour of the world was to be like himself. God gave him frequent revelations. The most extraordinary, though at the same time the least important of all these, was, his making his goodness to pass before him, and proclaiming the name of the Lord. We may form many suppositions concerning the nature of this revelation, but it is probable they will all be incorrect. Let us apprehend it as we may, Mr. W. desires us not to let God rest till he grant us the same. He might with as good reason desire us not to let God rest till he translate us at once as he did Enoch, till he make the sun stand still for our satisfaction, till he present to our view such scenes as were revealed to Daniel and St. John. All these things are equally recorded in scripture; and when it is proved that any one of them is a privilege in which any Christian may partake, we will then allow he was justifiable in desiring us not to “let God rest till he makes his goodness pass before us, and proclaim the name of the Lord.”

There was an extraordinary circumstance which attended the privilege granted to Moses—his face shone in consequence of it, so that the people could not bear to behold him. The want of this mark might have been a strong presumption to Mr. W. that he never was so highly favoured as Moses. Or if he was, would it not have been incumbent on him to be importunate with God till he granted him this distinction likewise, in order that he might have credit for the other?

When God condescended to grant part of Moses' request, he appears to account for his granting him such

such a distinguished privilege, by saying, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy*^b; intimating, as we may reasonably suppose, that of his good pleasure he would be gracious to his servant Moses, in a manner not to be expected by the rest of mankind.

Mr. W's exhortation would appear in a different light if it did not immediately follow his condemning clause. In any other place it might only encourage fanaticism, but here it promotes uncharitableness. It is evident that when he desires us not to "let God rest till he makes his "goodness pass before us, and proclaim the name "of the Lord — — merciful, &c." he is speaking of that "faith and love, without which if any man "die, good it were for him that he had never "been born." This is the only construction we can put on his words: they must therefore in effect speak the following language; 'if you do not obtain the highest revelation ever granted to Moses you cannot be saved.'

In proceeding with his exhortation, he makes use of a scripture expression which is supposed to be of great importance—"Let no man persuade thee by "vain words to rest short of the prize of thy high "calling." It would have defeated his purpose to insert the context, *I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*^c. From this and the preceding verses it appears that St. Paul laboured to arrive at the utmost perfection of which his nature was capable, in order to obtain the prize of his high calling. But Mr. W's. exhortation, as illustrated by the tenor of his sermon, is to lay hold on the prize in the first instance as the only condition of our acceptance. The prize of our high calling is the reward promised to our faith and obedience, and comprehends under it more than

^a Exodus xxxiii. 19. ^b Phil. iii. 14.

than can enter the heart of man. When we assert that this reward is neither moral goodness nor religion, nor the indispensable condition of our justification, that it is neither necessary nor designed to be conferred on us in this world, we do not persuade men to rest short of the prize, but we caution them against a dangerous rock in the pursuit of it; for whoever *shuts up the kingdom of Heaven against men*^k on no moral or religious account, but to gratify an enthusiastic fancy, is in imminent danger of not entering in himself.

We proceed to his next quotation, *When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*^l. In this text, and in one of a like import^m, no one pretends to discover a direct witness, except by implication; for they will render it necessary if it can be shewn from them that justification always precedes sanctification. We should have a clear idea of these terms before we discuss the propriety of this order. Justification means forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, and sanctification implies holiness, righteousness, piety and charity, all which again suppose the assistance of the grace of God. Those terms are thus understood by all parties; but the order in which Mr. W. places them is peculiar to Methodists. A direct spiritual seeing and tasting the love of God, says he, is never bestowed "but on the ungodly" and unholy, on those who till that hour (or instant) were fit only for everlasting destructionⁿ. So that men must be justified and even directly informed so by God himself before they are sanctified, that is, before they forsake their sins, before they lead holy lives devoted to God's service, before they have faith in Christ's merits and are in charity with mankind. This doctrine inverts the natural order of things, and opposes common reason as well as the whole tenor of revelation. Repentance, good works

^k Matt. xxiii. 13. ^l Rom. v. 6. ^m iv. 5. ⁿ First Appeal.

works and holiness are indispensable to procure the mercy of God; and on these conditions we shall certainly obtain, through the merits of Christ, forgiveness and future reward. Scripture is more full and explicit in asserting these important truths than upon any other subject. They are so self evident that perhaps Methodists will not deny them expressly, though they deny them effectually when they call a direct witness the only condition of justification. The passages to which the reader is referred * bear a very small proportion to what might be produced of the same tendency; yet they are sufficient to ascertain beyond all opposition that when mankind becomes holy and good, then and not before they become justified. The text must be rendered conformable to the rest of scripture, which can be done without the least difficulty, *When we were yet without strength*—when we were utterly unable of ourselves to atone for our sins, and when all the world appeared guilty before God; *in due time*—when the fulness of it was come, *Christ died for the ungodly*—he made an atonement by his death for the sins of mankind, not for righteous men who had no need of any propitiation, for none such ever existed, but for sinners. But this atonement was no assurance of justification to any sinner who would not comply with another intention of our Lord's mission. *He came to call sinners to repentance*^p. Repent, says he,

* Matt. v. vi. vii. xi. 28, 29. xiii. 23. xvi. 27. xviii. 3. xix. 17. xxv. 21, 30. Mark iv. 12. x. 17, 19, 29, 30. xi. 25, 26. Luke vi. 20 to 49. xviii. 29, 30. xix. 8, 9. xxi. 36. John xv. 10, 14. Acts ii. 21, 38. iii. 19. x. 2, 4, 35. xxvi. 18. Rom. ii. 6 to 14. vi. 22. viii. 13. xii. 1, 2. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. xv. 58. 2 Cor. v. 10. vii. 1, 10. ix. 6. Gal. vi. 7, 8, 9. Ephes. v. 5, 6. vi. 8. Phil. iv. 8, 9. Col. iii. 23, 24, 25. 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. 2 Thess. i. 5, 8. 1 Tim. iv. 8, 16. vi. 19. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13. Heb. v. 9. x. 36. xii. 14. James i. 12, 25, 27. iv. 8, 10. 1 Pet. ii. 20. iii. 10, 11, 12. iv. 8. 2 Pet. i. 4 to 11. 1 John ii. 3. iii. 7, 8, 14. Rev. ii. 10. xii. 12, 14, 15. ^p Mark ii. 17.

he, and believe the gospel, and except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish^a. If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments¹. Repent and be converted, says St. Peter, that your sins may be blotted out².

From this account of the text we may see in what sense the gifts and calling of God are without repentance^c. The redemption of mankind, the promise of the Comforter, the light of revelation, disclosing life and immortality, and the way to attain to it, are all gifts and favours for which we are indebted to the goodness and mercy of God, and not to any merits of our own. But those gifts will never justify us if we abuse them. They were all offered to the Jews; but God says of them, *all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people^d*. And if God spared not the Jews, the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God, on (the disobedient) which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in that goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off^e. Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it^f. And as the gifts and goodness of God to us will not justify us if we abuse them, so neither will his calling if we do not comply with it. Many are called, says Christ, but few chosen^g. He ordained that his Gospel should be preached to every creature^h, to give light to them that sit in darkness; but if men put from them the word of Godⁱ, and love darkness rather than light^b, the calling of God, so far from justifying them, will only add to their condemnation. God was in Christ, says St. Paul, reconciling the world to himself, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation; and yet this gift of God and the exercise of the Apostle's ministry, (or the calling

^a Luke xiii. 3. ¹ Matt. xix. 17. ² Acts iii. 19.
^c Rom. xi. 29. ^d x. 21. ^e xi. 21, 22. ^f Heb. iv. 9.
^g Matt. xxii. 14. ^h Mark xvi. 15. ⁱ Acts xiii. 26, 46.
^b John iii. 19.

ing by his Gospel ^c) is no justification without our own repentance and amendment, for he proceeds, *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God—we beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain* ^d. The same Apostle gives Timothy a most awful charge to *lay hold on eternal life, whereunto, says he notwithstanding, thou art also called* ^e. And St. Peter exhorts us to *give diligence to make our calling and election sure* ^f.

But it is pleaded, “no merit in man precedes the “pardoning love of God.” If this objection is of any weight, all men must be altogether ungodly and unholy in every possible condition; for no merit in man, speaking strictly, can either precede or follow the pardoning love of God. If sanctification implies meritorious perfection, there is no such thing to be expected in this world; for if God should enter into judgment with his servants, no man living would be justified in his sight ^g. But though merit and perfect good works can neither precede nor follow justification, yet we shall never be justified unless we repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and endeavour as much as in us lies to keep God's commandments.

We may consider in this place the verse in the foregoing chapter of a like import with the text, *To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*. St. Paul charges the Judaizing Christians with proceeding on a supposition that they were to be justified on the footing of a covenant of works ^h. This conduct he condemns as *perverting the gospel of Christ* ⁱ; *we are saved by grace, says he, not of works,*

^c 2 Thes. ii. 14. ^d 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. vi. 1. ^e 1 Tim. vi. 12.

^f 2 Pet. i. 10. Mr. Wesley is not the only person who has mistaken gifts, calling, election, &c. for justification; the same mistake has made numbers of people at all times believe in fate or predestination—a principle which when partially applied is inconsistent and refutes itself, but when carried to an extreme is Atheism.

^g Psalm cilliii. 2.

^h Gal. ii. iii. iv.

ⁱ i. 7.

works, lest any man should boast. Now to him that *worketh*—who demands or expects salvation by the merit of his works, is the reward not counted of grace but of debt—he foregoes his only plea to any reward, and insists on the payment of a debt which does not exist; *but to him that worketh not*—by these words is not described a wicked man fit only for everlasting destruction, but an humble, sincere man, who relies on the grace of God for justification, and not on the merit of his own works; *but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly*—depends for justification on the merits of Christ, who will pardon him though a sinner, on his repentance and faith; *his faith is counted for righteousness*—his faith and humility are accepted as the offering of a sincere heart, and he so far fulfills the conditions of his acceptance, which are faith and repentance.

In the same sentence with the last text we find part of the following, *for the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed.* Methodists make a double use of this; they produce it to prove that St. Paul had a constant direct experience of Christ; and they also use the words of this text in asserting their own experience, when they have nothing left to support their cause but assertion.

Now that St. Paul had a direct witness of Christ at his conversion is acknowledged; but we have his own testimony that he had not the same constantly, and that he did not expect it again until after his death. *We are always confident, says he, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: for we walk by faith, not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.*

But

² Ephes. ii. 8, 9. Rom. iii. 24, 27.

¹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

^m 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8, 9.

But what can they gain by contending that St. Paul had a constant direct experience of Christ, since the Apostle declares he was himself the last person who had seen him? The passage wherein he says this will illustrate the text. *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day—and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once—And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,—so we preach, and so ye believed^a.* Hence it appears that St. Paul had once received the gospel by direct revelation, and that the Corinthians believed it on his preaching, without any sight of Christ, for, says he, *last of all (Christ) was seen of me also*: and if no one had obtained a sight of Christ for fourteen years before, which was the time elapsed from St. Paul's conversion to his writing this Epistle, wherein he planted churches, converted multitudes, communicated gifts, why should it be necessary in the present time? It appears also that St. Paul had not a sight of Christ when he wrote this Epistle; for he speaks of it as a thing passed, as he did before in the ninth chapter, where he asks, *Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Christ? Are not you my work in the Lord?* It would have intitled him to still greater respect if he could have said with truth;—*do I not see Christ?* Yet how he could truly say this, and write his Epistle at the same time, is beyond our comprehension. On the whole it appears that if the doctrine of Methodists be good, St. Paul, for

for any thing we can see to the contrary, would have been better off if he had never been born, for from the time of his conversion, or from a few days after it to his death, there is no account of his having an immediate knowledge of Christ, while there are certain accounts that he was often without it.

The text is no exception; for since he received the gospel by direct revelation from Christ himself, he might therefore always know in whom he believed, though he had not always the same revelation: or if he had never received a direct revelation, he might have known in whom he believed *by bearing*^o, like the Corinthians^p and other christians^q.

If it appears now that St. Paul was the last person who had seen Christ, and that he had not a sight of him when he wrote the text, it can be of no other use to Methodists than to afford them a convenient form for the simple assertion of their own experience. And while they chuse to rely upon simple assertion, it is to no purpose to argue with them, or to attempt to shew them their error, for they will answer to the plainest scripture and most conclusive argument;—‘We know in whom we have believed,’ as much as to say, your reasoning is vanity, and your scripture is false, for we have a sight of Christ.

There can be no better paraphrase of this text than what may be given in the words of scripture; *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*^o, for which *I am an ambassador in bonds*^p, for *I know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ*^q. *I know he is a faithful and true witness*^r, *a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, able to succour them that are tempted*^s, *able also to save them to the uttermost who come to God by him*^t.

The

^o Rom. x. 17. ^p Acts xviii. 8. ^r 1 Cor. xv. 11.
^q John iv. 42. ^s xix. 35. ^t Rom. i. 16. ^u Ephes. vi. 20.
^v Acts ii. 36. ^w Heb. iii. 14. ^x ^y ii. 17, 18. ^z vii. 25.

Rev.

Rev.

The text which now offers itself to our consideration is indeed a confession of a direct witness of Christ ;—*My Lord and my God*^b. In these words Methodists address Christ, not as the object of faith but of intuition, as if they were unacquainted with the peculiar occasion of them. St. Thomas would not believe that Christ was really risen from the dead, until he had the testimony of his senses for it. Our Lord condescends to give him the proof he required, and St. Thomas, fully satisfied, cries out, *my Lord and my God*. What resemblance can there be between the case of St. Thomas and that of Christians in these days? If it should be maintained that there is any, it can answer no purpose but to furnish Roman Catholics with an admirable plea for Transubstantiation.

Our Lord's observation on the occasion does, by itself, totally overturn Mr. W's. account of Faith. *Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Here we have most unquestionable authority that we may believe, or have faith, without seeing, (that is, without having intuitive evidence) but this Methodists deny with a wonderful zeal.

The three next passages alluded to contain as little about the necessity of a direct witness; yet the two last are introduced in such a way as to demand some notice.—“Remember always to pray and not
“to faint, till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto
“heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever
“and ever, Lord thou knowest all things, thou
“knowest that I love thee.” Here he has contrived to work out a most sublime rant by bringing together passages the most unconnected. The Angel in Daniel and in the Revelation useth the form of lifting up his hand to heaven, and swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, to shew the certainty and importance of the prophecy, which respects the
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^b John xx. 28.

coming, duration, and destruction of Antichrist. And St. Peter, on being questioned by our Lord, declares the sincerity of his love for his Master, by saying, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*¹. According to the obvious sense of Mr. W's exhortation, he would have his perfect man to use the same form and the same words in attestation to his Love to God.

But such a declaration in the mouth of a Methodist must have a very different signification from that used by St. Peter. When our Lord asked him the first time *Lovest thou me?* he who *knew all things* knew that he was not sufficiently affected with zeal in his service, or he would have been contented with the first answer, and would not have asked him the same question the second and third time. When he was asked the third time, he was touched to the heart, and he answered with emotion, *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*. Then, and not before, our Lord thinks him in a fit mind to be informed of what he should suffer for the Gospel, the knowledge of which would prove the sincerity of his love and zeal.

In this most admirable relation, we see nothing like a solemn appeal to the justice of heaven. St. Peter addresses his Lord present before him, and not God the Father, as Mr. W. recommends. When he asserted with such emotion his love for his master, we must suppose he was as much influenced by a particular personal attachment, as by a steady holy faith. The former he could avow instantly; but to declare the latter judiciously would have required time, and the recollection of a good life free from any known failures. No doubt his declaration was accompanied with proper humility. He had a recent instance of his own frailty, which must remind him how unseemly it would appear in him to lift up his hands to Heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, that he loved not only

¹ John xxi. 17.

only his Lord with whom he had conversed for years, but the God and Father of all. He could not make such a solemn declaration, if he did not presume that he had such a love of God as he might worthily offer, and God should accept, which implies the perfection of duty. We cannot attribute to St. Peter such presumption and forgetfulness of his Lord's injunction, *when ye have done your best say, we are unprofitable servants*^k. Yet according to Mr. W. it is in this confident manner men ought to address the Almighty. The humble *Publican would not lift up so much as his eyes towards heaven*^l; while we see in imagination, the boasting Pharisee lifting up his hands and his eyes, and expatiating on the merit of his performances. Our Saviour's observation on the different conduct of those two persons conveys a lesson very opposite to the spirit of Mr. W's exhortation, *He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*.

The only remaining Scripture words which can be supposed to relate to a direct witness are "we have peace with God through Jesus Christ^m" and "rejoicing in hope of the glory of Godⁿ." St. Paul will explain what is implied by the first text: *Christ having made our peace through the blood of his cross*^o; and the other text cannot possibly imply a direct internal witness; for such a witness and hope are incompatible. Every sincere Christian may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. When we have such a *cloud of witnesses*^p for the truth of our Lord's promises, and are conscious of our sincerity, we may with St. Paul rejoice in *the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world*^q.

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^k Luke xvii. 10.^m Rom. v. 1.^p Heb. xii. 1.^l Luke xviii. 10 — — 15.ⁿ 2.^o Col. i. 20.^q 2 Cor. i. 12.

What judgment should we now form of Mr. W's. Sermon, if it appears that none of his texts prove that we cannot be saved without an internal knowledge of our salvation, obtained by a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit ;—nay if not one of them contains even the most distant mention of such a knowledge? If no better reason can be given for its necessity than his experience, and if his doctrine cannot be reconciled with scripture, (which can never be done without reconciling contradictions) then all impartial and well informed men will pronounce that he has taught other Gospel than the Gospel of Christ. And when a man supports a doctrine contrary to scripture, by an appeal to his experience, it is charity to suppose him an enthusiast.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS.

IN the preceding Remarks on Mr. Wesley's Sermon, we have attempted to shew, that he has advanced a new doctrine, unsupported by scripture, or by the authority of our Church. Some persons will be apt to say; ' though the texts which have been examined do not prove the necessity of direct revelation, yet it will not follow from this but that many others may.' Of this plea it is a sufficient refutation, that neither the church nor scripture can prove contradictions. They both require from us such qualities, as scripture declares expressly are inconsistent with certain knowledge; and therefore no text, or passage in the Liturgy can possibly imply the necessity of direct revelation. But as some readers may have been a long time in the habit of thinking differently, it is probable they will suspect this summary argument, though to every one beside it will appear conclusive; or, perhaps they will be at a loss to know what to believe, imagining that different parties can produce authorities, contradictory to each other, for their different opinions; and some persons, for the same reason may be tempted to entertain doubts concerning the Gospel Revelation. We shall therefore endeavour to give all persons every satisfaction which they can reasonably

reasonably require, that Methodists can produce no authority from our church, or from Scripture, for their peculiar tenets. And I conceive it will be granted that this engagement will be made good, when we ascertain the true sense of those places, which all persons will be most desirous to see explained; because they are most insisted on by Methodists.

1. The priest pronounces in the absolution, 'He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel.' Pardon and Absolution are here declared to follow from true repentance and an unfeigned belief of the gospel; and unless either or both of these conditions necessarily suppose a direct Revelation; Methodists must grant that the doctrine, here advanced, directly contradicts their notion of Justification by the direct witness of the Spirit and knowledge of our Pardon. The first condition is out of the question; and common sense and experience, and the plain import of the words will not admit any such construction of the second. Nothing can be more opposite to common sense and experience, than to say, 'we cannot have an unfeigned belief of the gospel, unless we have each of us an immediate particular revelation attesting its truth': nor can we suppose that the compilers of the Liturgy would be guilty of such a solecism as the following, 'God pardoneth and absolveth all them that know their Pardon and Absolution.' What must Deists and Atheists say, when they see it maintained by a sect of Christians, that the excellence and outward evidences of the gospel, under the influence of God's grace, cannot gain it belief; but that, to produce this effect, it is necessary we should each of us have an immediate Revelation?

2. The Priest exhorts us in the next sentence of the Absolution,—'Let us beseech him to grant us — his holy Spirit.' On occasions like this, our
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sole concern is to be on the defensive, while it is incumbent on Methodists to prove, that a direct witness is implied by having the Holy Spirit. The plain question is, Can we have the Spirit, while we have no immediate perception of his presence? To maintain that we cannot, would be a most unwarrantable attempt to limit his power and operations; yet this is done by Methodists with great positiveness, on no other ground than simple assertion. If the Spirit helps our infirmities, sanctifies, directs and comforts us, and strengthens in us all good dispositions, we have the Spirit in a very important sense; and that he cannot do all this without expressly revealing himself is what none will venture to say but Methodists.

3. The Belief is next to be considered: 'I believe in God—in Jesus Christ—in the Holy Ghost.' Perhaps it will be said that we cannot join in this sincerely without immediate Revelation. Every honest man in his senses will say the contrary. If direct revelation be necessary for our belief in Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, the same cause must account for our belief, that Christ 'was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered,' &c.—which I suppose is not pretended.

It will be objected, that the belief of these things is the faith of Devils. But what can be hence inferred? Is it that we must have intuitive evidence for them, that we may not have the faith of Devils? If we had no other rule and motive we should infer the direct contrary, for it is generally allowed they have this evidence, and yet they are no way the better for it. The Devil's faith according to St. James, is a faith not attended with good works; but if our faith produce good works, or any good work, it is impossible it can be like that of Devils.

4. 'And

4. ' And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.' Until a prayer for the Holy Spirit be proved to be a prayer for a direct sight of him, we cannot admit that we deprecate the removal of this sight, by praying that God would not take his Holy Spirit from us.

5. ' And the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be ' with us all.' These words have a higher authority than that of our Liturgy. The same question occurs here as did in a former place;—In order to have the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, that is, his dwelling with us, his blessing and especial Grace; is it necessary for us to have an immediate sight and knowledge of him? This question puts the whole matter in dispute between us and Methodists to a very short issue. If they will produce a single place in the Liturgy or Bible wherein this necessity appears, we shall grant that their doctrine has the authority of God and man. If they can even shew, that a direct witness of the Spirit is any where mentioned as a privilege, which Christians in general may enjoy; though this will not be sufficient to justify them for making it essential, yet it will silence us, and prove our ignorance.

We have already given a quotation from one of the Homilies, which shews, that the manner in which our church would have us to find out whether we have the Holy Ghost or not, is by enquiring whether we have his fruits.—' If any man live ' uprightly,' (as we read in the second part of the same Homilie, ' of him it may safely be pronounced, that he hath the Holy Ghost within him.' This opinion is agreeable to every direction on this subject contained in the Gospel. We are never directed therein to form a judgment of our own state, or of the state of other persons, by attending to any direct witness of the Spirit, or to any assertion of this Experience; but we are constantly directed to judge of the goodness of our state, and of the presence

presence of God's Holy Spirit, by no other means than by his fruits; that is, by our obedience to God's commandments ^a.

6. In the Collect on the Nativity we pray to be 'daily renewed by God's Holy Spirit.' If what has already been said on this subject be just, we do not pray by those words for a daily sight of God's Holy Spirit; but for a blessing much more suitable to our condition;—that as we are born again and sanctified by the Holy Ghost on our introduction into the state of Christians; so, that the influence of the same Spirit may be continued to us daily through our lives, to enable us to subdue all evil propensities, to delight in Holiness and Virtue and to make continual improvements therein.

7. 'And being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors ^b. Send thy Holy Ghost and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity ^c. Send thy Holy Ghost to comfort us ^d. Grant us evermore to rejoice in his holy Comfort ^e. Grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts ^f. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit ^g.'

In those places we pray for the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; that he would enable us to have Charity for our persecutors, that he would excite it in our hearts, that he would comfort us, direct, rule, and cleanse our hearts and lives. If any one should say

^a Matt. vii. 16, 20, to verse 27. xii. 33, 50. Luke vi. 46. John xiv. 15, 23. xv. 8, 10, 14. Rom. ii. 13. 1 Corin. vii. 19. Gal. v. 22. Ephes. v. 9. Phil. iv. 9. James ii. 26. iii. 17. 1 John i. 6, 7. ii. 3, 4, 5. iii. 6, 7, 10, 14, 19, to 24. x. 3, 18. 2 John vi. Rev. xxii. 14.

^b Collect for St. Stephen's day.

^c ——— for Quinquagesima.

^d ——— Sunday after Ascension.

^e ——— Whitsunday.

^f ——— nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

^g Collect beginning the Communion Service.

say that the Holy Ghost cannot influence us in this manner without revealing himself to our certain knowledge, he must content himself with begging the question.

8. ' Grant that we which know thee now by Faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead ^h. ' If a direct Revelation be implied in any part of the Liturgy, it must certainly be in those words; because Faith is said to be the extent of that knowledge which is obtained in this life: yet this Faith and the Fruition of God are here put in direct opposition to each other.

We may remark upon this occasion, that there is no word in our language, which expresses a Methodist's idea of Faith, more exactly than the word Fruition, understood in the most unlimited sense. By substituting this word for their Faith, the reader may easily be master of the sense and spirit of any of their works; and without a clue of this sort, he may be a long time bewildered in a labyrinth.

There is no passage in the Liturgy more likely to imply a direct revelation than those which have now been produced. But there is a question in the office of Ordination which will require some notice, not because it is expressed in very strong terms, but because Methodists rest upon it with great Emphasis.

9. The Bishop asks the person to be ordained, ' Do you trust you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon you ? ' He answers, ' I trust so. ' They put the following construction on these words. Has the Holy Ghost conveyed to you an impression, which you can distinguish to proceed from him, urging you to take upon yourself this office? The answer to this, if in the affirmative, must be, ' He has conveyed to me this Impression. ' The difference between these questions and answers must

^h Collect for the Epiphany.

must be obvious to every capacity. If the Bishop should ask another very natural question, why do you trust so? a Methodist candidate must feel very awkward, for he could give no other than the same answer. But a person properly disposed might answer this question thus: I wish to be active in promoting the interests of Religion and virtue; I long to be placed in that station, wherein I can most effectually serve the souls of men; and should I be placed therein, I have an humble hope, though I am in many respects unworthy, that God will make me an instrument of *turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*. But I believe 'all holy desires and good counsels,' proceed from the Spirit of God, and that I should not have those good desires but for his gracious influence. Therefore I trust, that I am moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon myself the sacred office of a fellow-labourer with our Lord in the vineyard of the Gospel.

10. They contend that 'Justification by Faith only' in the Articles and throughout the Homilies, signifies justification by means of a direct and supernatural knowledge of it. This doctrine reminds us of a remark which has often been made, that men will maintain such absurdities in religion as they would be perfectly ashamed of in any other concern of life. To make the knowledge of forgiveness the condition or the cause of obtaining it is a very preposterous language. Yet Methodists define 'faith' a direct knowledge of our pardon and of the favour of God: by this faith, say they, we are justified; which is expressly saying, we are justified by a knowledge of our justification. The Articles and Homilies fully explain their own meaning when they say we are justified by faith only. The eleventh article runs thus, 'we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most whole-
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‘ some doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more
 ‘ largely is expressed in the Homily of Justifica-
 ‘ tion.’ In four or five places of that Homilie, ‘ Jus-
 ‘ tification by Faith only,’ is said to be, Justifica-
 tion by the merits of Christ; and in one of those
 places, in the following terms. ‘ The true under-
 ‘ standing this Doctrine — — we be justified — by
 ‘ Faith in Christ only, is not, that this our own act
 ‘ to believe in Christ, or this our Faith in Christ,
 ‘ which is within us, doth justify us, and deserve
 ‘ our Justification unto us, (for that were to count
 ‘ ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that
 ‘ is within ourselves) but the true understanding and
 ‘ meaning thereof is, that although we hear God’s
 ‘ word and believe it, although we have faith, hope,
 ‘ charity, repentance, dread, and fear of God with-
 ‘ in us, and do never so many works thereunto :
 ‘ yet we must renounce the merit of all our said
 ‘ virtues, of faith, hope, charity, and all other vir-
 ‘ tues and good deeds, which we either have done,
 ‘ shall do, or can do, as things that be far too weak
 ‘ and insufficient, and imperfect, to deserve remis-
 ‘ sion of our sins, and our justification; and there-
 ‘ fore we must trust only in God’s mercy, and that
 ‘ sacrifice which our High Priest and Saviour Christ
 ‘ Jesus the Son of God once offered for us upon the
 ‘ cross, to obtain thereby God’s grace and remission,
 ‘ as well of our original sin in Baptism, as of all
 ‘ actual sin committed by us after our Baptism, if
 ‘ we truly repent and turn unfeignedly to him again.’
 Nothing more decided and explicit than all this can
 be desired.

We are again referred in the Homilie to St. Paul
 — ‘ The old antient Fathers — — from time to
 ‘ time have uttered our Justification with this
 ‘ speech, only Faith justifieth us, meaning no other
 ‘ thing than St. Paul meant, when he saith, Faith
 ‘ without works justifieth us.’ Accordingly we
 shall see that St. Paul explains this expression in the
 same manner in which our Church has done, for
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what he calls in one place, *being justified by faith*, he calls shortly after, *being justified by the blood of Christ*, and being *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*ⁱ. That the death and sacrifice of Christ is the only cause which merits our Justification, is the doctrine of the whole New Testament^k. The Apostle appears, at first sight, to assign a different cause, when he says we are justified by Faith alone, but it is in fact the very same, for he uses Faith in the passive sense, meaning by it the object of our Faith, that is, the Gospel at large — the particular dispensation which Christians believe. Faith has this meaning in a number of places, which the reader may see^l, or else he may judge from the following. *Before Faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the Faith, which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our School-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith. But after that Faith is come, we are no longer under a School-master*^m. That Faith is here put for the Gospel requires no proof. When it signifies thus the thing believed or the object of our faith, it is precisely the same thing to say, we are justified by Faith only, and to say, we are justified by the death and sacrifice of Christ; for this death and sacrifice

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ⁱ Rom. v. 1, 9, 10. See also Eph. ii. 13 to 18.

^k Matt. xx. 28. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. John x. 11. xi. 50, 51, 52. xiv. 6. Acts iv. 12. xx. 28. Rom. iii. 24. iv. 25. viii. 32. 1 Corin. xv. 3. 2 Corin. v. 18, 19. Gal. i. 4. Ephes. i. 7. ii. 13. v. 2. Col. i. 14, 20. 1 Theff. v. 9. 2 Theff. ii. 16. joined with 1 John iii. 16. 1 Tim. ii. 6. 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Tit. ii. 14. Heb. i. 3. vii. 27. ix. 12, 14, 22, 26, 28. x. 19. xiii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 19. ii. 24. iii. 18. 1 John i. 7. ii. 2. Rev. i. 5. v. 9.

^l Acts vi. 7. (compared with Rom. i. 5. x. 16. Gal. iii. 1. 2 Theff. i. 8.) xiii. 8. xiv. 22, 27. xvi. 5. xxiv. 24. Rom. x. 8. (compared with xv. 20. and with 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.) 1 Cor. xvi. 13. Gal. i. 23. (compared with Acts xiv. 7.) ii. 16. vi. 10. Ephes. iv. 5. Phil. i. 27. iii. 9. Col. i. 23. ii. 7. 1 Tim. iv. 1, 6. v. 8. vi. 10. iii. 9. (compared with Ephes. vi. 19.) Tit. i. 4. Heb. x. 23. Rev. xiv. 12.

^m Gal. iii. 23, 24, 25.

is the main object of a Christian's belief. But when we understand by Faith, the act of believing in us, the Apostle could not then say we are justified by this, without contradicting the whole New Testament, and maintaining the very doctrine, which, upon this occasion, he purposely denies; for this act of believing must then be considered as a good work, and by works he asserts that we can never merit Justification^a. Hence we see how closely the writers of the Homilies have copied St. Paul.

To prevent confusion in our ideas upon this subject, it should always be remembered that the Death of Christ is the only meritorious cause of our Justification, for no work of ours can be sufficiently perfect for this purpose: but there are certain conditions required from us, which, by the assistance of the grace of God, we must perform, or the merits of Christ will be of no service to us. These are, faith and repentance, or good works, which are required throughout the whole Gospel, as the indispensable conditions of Justification^o. It is always in our own power, through the grace of God, to *add to our faith virtue, and to make our calling and election sure^p*, for if we resist the devil he will flee

^a Rom. iii. 20. to 28. Gal. ii. 16. Eph. ii. 9.

^o Mr. W. denies that there are any conditions to be performed by us in order to our being justified—"Faith," says he, (that is an immediate feeling by spiritual senses of God's Love and Pardon) is "given instantaneously to that person only, who has done evil continually, who, until the moment he received it, did every thing to deserve everlasting destruction." If this be good doctrine, and if there be any condition of Justification whatsoever, it must be every thing which deserves everlasting destruction: and farther, unless works of this damnable kind be repentance, his doctrine will not allow that there is any such thing: for according to it, we can do no other kind of work before our conversion; the act of our conversion is completed in an instant, in which we cannot repent, because we can have no succession of Ideas; and after our conversion we are perfect, when it would be absurd to think of repenting.

^p 2 Pet. i. 5 10.

from us, if we draw nigh to God, he will draw nigh to us; if we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, he shall lift us up^a; and whenever we sincerely, though still imperfectly, perform the conditions required from us, the merits of Christ will certainly be effectual to reconcile us to God. It is for this reason that the Apostles sometimes attribute our Justification to works, as where St. Paul says, *the doers of the law shall be justified*^r. He does not mean that any one can be justified in the sight of God^s by the perfection of his own works; but if he speaks consistently, he must certainly mean, whoever performs good works to the best of his power shall be justified through the merits of Christ. This distinction is made in the quotation which we have just given from the Homilies, and is frequently to be met with in Scripture. St. Paul, after observing to the Colossians that Christ had made peace through the blood of his Cross, says farther, *and you that were some time alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel*^t. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, *Christ became the author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him*^u. In many other places the cause and conditions of our Justification are clearly distinguished^w.

That St. Paul speaks of the former when he says we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law must be admitted, to prevent his contradicting St. James as well as himself; for St. James says, *a man is justified by works and not by faith only*^x; evidently

^a James iv. 7, 8, 10.

^r Rom. ii. 13.

^s Psalm. cxliiii. 2.

^t Col. i. 21, 22, 23.

^u Heb. 5. 9.

^w Mal. iv.

2. John iii. 16. Acts xiii. 39. 1 Cor. xv. 2, 3. 2 Cor. v. 15.

1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. Heb. iv. 1. vi. 12. vii. 25. ix. 28. x. 19

to 25, 29. 1 John i. 7. iv. 10, 11.

^x James ii. 24.

evidently expressing the conditions of our Justification : and if St. Paul also spoke of the conditions, there must be a direct opposition between two inspired Apostles. But if St. Paul, where he says, *being justified by faith*, means the same thing, as where he says shortly after, *being justified by (Christ's) blood, and reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, and consequently speaks of the meritorious cause of Justification, then all appearance of inconsistency with himself, and of contradiction to St. James is entirely removed, and their respective observations are strictly conformable to Scripture and right reason. St. Paul excludes works from the office of justifying us, because *to him that worketh*, who can perform perfect meritorious works, *is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt* ; but such a debt to any human being does not exist, for he charges Christians, Jews and Gentiles with sin¹ ; *that every mouth may be stopped and all the world*, if judged by the strictness of the law, *may become subject to the judgment of God* ; *Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight*. After thus denying our own merit, he then declares the meritorious cause of our Justification, *Being justified freely by the grace (of God), through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. He afterwards answers an objection to this doctrine, *Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid ; yea, we establish the law*² — that is, do we remit the necessity of good works by teaching that we are justified freely by the merits of Christ ? God forbid ; on the contrary this doctrine lays us under the highest obligation to be fruitful in good works, for *how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation ?* He therefore makes good works an essential condition of Justification ; and in this he perfectly agrees with St. James. The two Apostles also require faith from us, which is properly a good

¹ Rom. iii. 9.

² Rom. iii.

good work, as it implies an humble teachable disposition, fond of truth, and diligent in the search of it. In many cases indeed the evidences of the Gospel have been so powerful that even men of vicious minds could not withhold their assent from it, and therefore St. James supposes that faith and works may be separate; such a faith he pronounces *dead*, which will profit a man nothing.

The reason why St. James insists so emphatically on the necessity of works joined to faith will appear when we consider, that St. Paul often made faith or belief the condition of our justification, without mentioning works, not doubting but what he omitted for the sake of brevity would naturally be supplied by all who had the least knowledge of the Gospel, and by those who had ever heard him, or had read any one of his Epistles, who must have understood him to mean, a *faith which worketh by love*^a. As where he says, *The Gospel—is the power of God to Salvation to every one that believeth*^b. Again, *The righteousness of God without the law is manifested—by faith*, that is by the Gospel, *of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe*^c. And again, *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation — — to declare his righteousness — — that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus*^d. Farther still, *To us also will righteousness be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and rose again for our justification*^e, *for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*^f. In those places, where we evidently distinguish the cause and condition of our justification, he makes the condition to be Belief alone. His words are no more than a transcript from the words of our Saviour^g. And as many *unlearned and unstable persons*

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^a Gal. v. 6.^b Rom. i. 16.^c Rom. iii. 21, 22.

Gal. iii. 22.

^d Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25, 26.^e Rom. iv. 24, 25,^f Rom. x. 4.^g John iii. 14. — — 21.

Mark xvi. 16.

sons had *wrested* the *scriptures* and St. Paul's meaning in particular^h, and had supposed that he confined the conditions of Justification to the simple act of Faith, St. James exposes their error, and maintains, that works also are indispensable conditions. For this reason wherever Faith is mentioned in the Gospel as the condition of Justification, we must constantly understand by it, a *faith which worketh by love*.

There never would have been any difference of opinion respecting St. Paul's meaning, if it were not the endeavour of many teachers to perplex it as much as possible, in hopes that the confusion of Ideas excited thereby, might give them an opportunity of asserting without a blush their favourite doctrines;—and strange as it may appear, many act thus, who imagine they are sincere. Of all the strange opinions attributed to St. Paul by *unlearned and unstable* persons, none appears more extraordinary, than that Faith is an immediate sight of God and knowledge of our pardon, and that these are essential to Justificationⁱ. We can have no conception how any one could even go about proving, that those were St. Paul's opinions.

We may be indulged here with a remark, that the doctrine of Justification by faith alone, as taught by St. Paul, instead of favouring the notion of perfection, as it is thought to do by Methodists most completely refutes it. *For if there had been a law*

^h 2 Pet. iii. 16.

ⁱ By this definition of faith as the condition of Justification, Mr. W. makes all the exhortations of the Gospel a mere mockery, for he often says that we cannot perform this condition, nor have the smallest act in it;—that it is entirely the gift of God, which he bestows on those only who from necessity are all ungodly and unholy. Where St. Paul attributes our Salvation through Faith to the gift of God and not to ourselves (Ephes. ii. 8.) it is self-evident that he speaks of the cause and not the conditions of Justification: but Mr. W. understands this of the latter, though it is true only of the former, and therefore the natural effect of his doctrine must be, to make us Predestinarians, Antinomians, Atheists.

law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law^{*}. If we could observe the moral or Mosaic law in perfection, we should have been justified by either. God's righteousness or holiness might have been satisfied without the atonement of Christ, and Christ must have died in vain¹. But all boasting of perfection is excluded by the law of Faith^m, that is, of the gospel. The Scripture hath concluded all under sinⁿ. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ^o.

If any thing more be requisite to prove that a direct Revelation is no where to be implied in the Liturgy, Articles or Homilies, the following reason will perhaps be thought sufficient. If the Compilers believed that it was the condition or cause of Justification, that it was promised, or was in any respect necessary to be obtained, they would have given us some express instruction on the subject, and they would certainly have composed one prayer for it in plain terms. It is not to be supposed, there would then be a necessity for such a forced and arbitrary construction of their words, to prove that they held such opinions; as, applied to several parts of the Liturgy, would equally prove, that they held any opinion whatsoever.

The Plea set up by some persons against the force of this observation, makes them appear too ignorant and weak to be argued with. They say, the necessity of direct revelation was so generally acknowledged, that our Church needed not to have made any very clear or particular mention of it. Can we suppose then, that the Compilers of the Liturgy would not form one prayer, in unequivocal terms, for a gift, which they and all the world be-

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lieved

^{*} Gal. iii. 21.

¹ Gal. ii. 21.

^m Rom. iii. 27.

ⁿ Gal. iii. 22.

^o Rom. iii. 23, 24.

lieved was the sufficient, and also the indispensable condition or cause of Justification?

We have now done with the words of our church, and shall proceed, as we proposed, to examine a few texts of Scripture, on which Methodists rely most for the support of their doctrine.

1. The third verse of the third chapter of St. John is frequently introduced with great solemnity. *Verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* They contend that being born again are only other words for having received the direct witness of the Spirit, by means of new and infallible senses. We might prove the metempsychosis of Pythagoras from this text with as much plausibility. There is nothing in the context or in any parallel place which can favour either notion; and the former is foreign to any thing contained in the text. It is not our part to prove these negative propositions, but to overturn the arguments, which they may produce in support of the affirmative. Every argument which they can produce to this purpose must be refuted by the eighth verse. *Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so is every man that is born of the Spirit.* That is, I will remove your wonder and incredulity, on my saying you must be born again, by a familiar instance;—Though the effects of the wind be very perceivable, yet the wind itself is invisible, we do not see it in its progress; in like manner, the fruits and effects, which the Spirit produces in our lives and minds are very perceivable, but the Spirit itself escapes our senses, we do not certainly know the manner of his operation. This comparison fairly shews that in order to be born again, we are not to expect a direct perception of the Spirit.

The

The following is the true scriptural sense of being born again, or of the new birth, so often mentioned in the New Testament. It implies, first, a removal from a state of nature or wrath to a state of grace^p, and in this sense, all Christians whatsoever have been born again^q; and, secondly, a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness^r, effected by the power of God's grace, co-operating with our own sincere endeavours^s. Without this new birth we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but without a direct witness of the Spirit we may, or *good it were for us we had never been born.*

2. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself^t.* What witness? Is it an immediate Revelation of his Salvation? Nothing is more foreign to the Apostle's subject. Every one, not wilfully blind, will acknowledge it to be the witness *which God testified of his Son.* *If, says the Apostle, we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.* *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not on the record that God gave of his Son.* He that believeth, and he that believeth not are here put in opposition to each other; and the believer is said to admit the same testimony which the unbeliever rejects. To have in one's self the testimony

^p John i. 17. Rom. iv. 15. v. 9, 12, 20, 21. The whole second chapter to the Ephesians.

^q 1 Cor. xv. 22. 1 John ii. 2.

^r Rom. vi. 4 to 14. xii. 2, and to the end. Gal. vi. 15. as explained by v. 6. and by 1 Cor. vii. 19. Ephes. iv. 17. and to the end. The third chapter to the Colossians. Tit. ii. 11, 12, 14. 1 Pet. i. 18 and to the end.

^s 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 12, 13, 15. Tit. iii. 8. Heb. xiii. 21. 2 Pet. i. 5 to 10. James iv. 8. Every exhortation to practice in the Bible is a proof of the necessity of our own endeavours.

^t 1 John v. 10,

testimony of God is put in opposition to making God a liar, and believing not the testimony which he gave of his Son, and therefore can bear no other construction than to allow the truth of God, and to believe his testimony. This construction is farther confirmed by the parallel place:—*He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true*^u. The only question therefore is, what is the testimony which God gave of his son? It is impossible it could have been a direct revelation to every particular person, for then all must not only have believed it, but known it from necessity; though St. John supposes that many do not believe it. Our Saviour himself will inform us. *I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath thus borne witness of me, though ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.—Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me*^w. God had testified of his Son by voices from Heaven, by prophecies fulfilled, by miracles, by raising him from the dead, by various gifts of the Holy Ghost, and by the excellence of his doctrine.

The advantage which a dishonest teacher has over an ignorant and illiterate audience, by the wrong application of a few texts like this, must be obvious. When he produces them in proof of the necessity of our obtaining a direct knowledge of God and of our salvation, such people have no way of detecting the fallacy put upon them; but must receive it as Scripture doctrine.

3. In a Sermon of Mr. Wesley's on the Witness of the Spirit, he says, "It cannot be proved that the direct as well as the indirect witness is not
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^u John iii. 33.

^w John v. 36, 37, 39.

“referred to in that very text, *Know ye not your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates* ^x.” Instead of thus throwing the negative proof upon us, it was his part to have proved affirmatively that the direct witness was actually referred to in these words. All that we are warranted from Scripture to infer from the expression of *Christ in us* is, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a christian faith and disposition. St. Paul says in this chapter, and on seven or eight different occasions, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Where two or three, says our Lord are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them* ^y. This assurance of grace is not confined to those who have a direct witness of Christ, but is given to all who are gathered together in his name. In the next place a christian faith may be implied by this expression, for St. Paul prays for the Ephesians, *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith* ^z, consequently he does not pray that they might obtain a direct witness, but rather the contrary, for says he, *We walk by faith and not by sight* ^a. To know Christ otherwise than by faith was neither promised to Christians nor required from them. His disciples were *his witnesses unto the people* ^b. But they must have appeared as fools or madmen in this important character, if they taught that men could have no knowledge of Christ and must inevitably remain reprobates without a direct witness. A christian disposition is the last thing which may be inferred from this expression. St. Paul exhorts the Philippians, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*. And a christian mind or disposition is itself the proof that Christ dwelleth in us. *Let us love* says St. John *in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him* — —
love

^x 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^y Matt. xviii. 20.

^z Ephes. iii. 17.

^a Cor. v. 7.

^b Acts xiii. 31.

love one another as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us by the spirit of love and obedience which he hath given us^c. Now if we knew that Christ dwelled in us by a direct witness, it would supercede every circuitous means of acquiring this knowledge; and to say then that a disposition of love and obedience may be an additional and material proof of Christ's dwelling in us is just as wise as to say—a person who sees his friend alive before him may receive a farther and material proof of his being alive by metaphysical arguments.

The other expression in this text, *Know ye not*, occurs often in St. Paul's Epistles, and is no where an Appeal to a self-evident truth, which men see and know without recollection, but is a mode of speech by which he either reminds men of his former instructions, or appeals to their natural reason and experience^d.

These observations sufficiently account for the text. But there is certain proof that very faithful and devout Christians, in the Apostles days, had not a direct witness of Christ. For St. Peter, speaking of him, says, *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory^e*. Nay St. Paul himself who was no reprobate, obtained a revelation of Christ but once in his life. At no other time, nor even then, to his knowledge, had he such a direct witness of him as Methodists arrogate to themselves. They pretend that while they have Faith, they have also an intuitive communion with Christ; that with some spiritual senses, answerable to our bodily senses, they see, hear, taste, and feel God. But St. Paul, far from claiming this presence of God, or of Christ, while he *lives in the flesh*,

^c 1 John iii. 18, 19, 23, 24. ^d Rom. vi. 3, 16. vii. 1. xi. 2
1 Cor. v. 6. vi. 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19. ix. 13. 24.
^e 1 Pet. i. 8.

flesh[†], is willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord[‡]. For, says he, I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better[§]. All these authorities will be abundant proof to every reasonable person, that “the direct witness is not referred to in this very text.”

But farther, as all parties must admit that St. Paul would not teach a false and absurd doctrine, there is direct proof from the text itself, that he does not refer therein to a direct witness. If he had done so, what would his question be? *Know ye not your own selves that ye have intuitive knowledge of Christ, except ye be reprobates?* Now Methodists will confess that no man whatsoever has constantly an intuitive knowledge of Christ. When we consider the infirmity of man's nature, the Rest, and other means requisite for preserving life, and the avocations unavoidable in such a world as this; it will appear impossible for any one to support a constant intuitive knowledge of Christ, or to exist under it. But if the Apostle's question implies that every man who has not this direct witness must be a reprobate; consequently the most perfect man in the world, as he must be often and for a considerable portion of his time without the witness, must also be often and for a considerable portion of his time a reprobate. If he should obtain frequent revelations of Christ, he must be a Saint and a reprobate by alternate starts; and if he dies insensible, or with no intuitive knowledge of Christ, he dies a reprobate, and is lost for ever. The Apostle could not teach this false and absurd doctrine.

Nothing can possibly be advanced to clear the Apostle from the imputation of this absurdity, but that having once or oftner obtained a sight of Christ is sufficient whenever we can recollect it, or during the whole course of our lives. Methodists will

† Phil. i. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 8.

§ Phil. i. 23.

will hardly speak thus; it looks too like the impious boast of some Predestinarians. Or if they should, this plea is inconsistent with Mr. W's. definition of Faith; which is, a "Sight of God," and not a recollection of having seen him.

4. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*^l. That is, if any man have not a Christian disposition, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot belong to him. All the observations on the preceding text are alike applicable to this: but we may add here another observation, the force of which Methodists will not readily obviate. We are assured in Scripture that *he that committed sin is of the Devil*^k, and without sobriety and vigilance all men are in danger of yielding to his temptation^l. If now to belong to Christ and to be under the influence of his grace, it be necessary to have direct knowledge of him; then to belong to the Devil and to be under his influence, we must have a sight of him also. If we cannot be influenced in the former case without seeing the agent; much less can we in the other, or we must attribute more power to Satan than to God. Therefore, to preserve consistence, they should add this article to their Creed—Every man who *committeth sin* has a sight of the Devil.

When Methodists are taxed with uncharitableness for their doctrine, that all are damned who do not obtain and preserve a direct revelation of the favour of God; they produce this and the former text, and say they are not more uncharitable than St. Paul. But if it has been proved that St. Paul taught no such doctrine in those texts, they must appear to stand by themselves, on a footing the most perilous and alarming^m.

5. *Hereby*

^l Rom. viii. 9.

^l 1 Pet. v. 8.

^k John iii. 8. Matt. xiii 38.

^m Matt. vii. 2.

5. *Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. And hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit^a. Any unbiaſſed perſon who will read the third and fourth chapters of St. John's Epistle where thoſe two verſes occur, will be ſatisfied that the Spirit in thoſe verſes, means the Spirit or diſpoſition of love. This interpretation is not invented upon the occaſion, for Spirit is often put for a temper or diſpoſition^o, and St. Paul had ſaid particularly, *God hath — — given us the Spirit — — of love^p*. The Apoſtle declares twice, that the Love of God toward us was manifested in our redemption by the death of Chriſt. He aſſerts emphatically, *God is love*. He exhorts us to *love one another as Chriſt gave us commandment*, and as *God loved us*. No man ſays he, *hath ſeen God at any time*, yet if we love one another *God dwelleth in us. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him. And hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us by the Spirit which he hath given us*, or, *because he hath given us of his Spirit*, that is, *because of his Grace*, he has imparted to us the ſame ſpirit of love toward our brethren, which is his moſt glorious attribute. He makes farther mention of this likenes to God in the third and fourth verſes after the latter text. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldneſs in the day of Judgment: because as he is, ſo are we in this world*. We meet with the ſame reaſon in the 14th verſe of the third Chapter, with only this difference, that the likenes to God is not expreſſed, but muſt be underſtood from all that follows. *We know that we have paſſed from death**

^a 1 John iii. 24. iv. 13. ^o Matt. v. 3. Luke ix. 55. Rom. ii. 29. vii. 6. xi. 8. xii. 11. 1 Cor. iv. 21. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Gal. vi. 1. Ephes. ii. 2. iv. 23. 1 Tim. iv. 12. 1 Pet. iii. 4.

^p 2 Tim. i. 7.

death unto life, because we love the Brethren. On the whole therefore it appears, that it is one of the fruits, and not the direct witness of the Spirit, to which the Apostle alludes. The whole third chapter proves this. The test according to which we are to judge of our abiding in Christ, of our being righteous, of our being born of God, of our being the children of God. of our having passed from death unto life, of the love of God dwelling in us, of our being of the truth, of our confidence toward God, of the acceptance of our petitions, of our dwelling in God and he in us, is declared in this chapter to be the not committing sin and the practice of righteousness, the loving the brethren, the loving in deed and in truth, the non-condemnation of our own hearts, the keeping God's commandments, the same spirit of love toward our brethren which God has manifested toward us. And the way by which we are to know the children of the Devil is said repeatedly to be, by their committing sin, by their not doing righteousness, and loving not their brother, by their hating their brother, and shutting up their bowels of compassion. When the Apostle appeals so decidedly to our obedience to, and breach of God's commandments, to those things which are the fruit of the Spirit, or the consequence of his absence; it is not likely that he would so soon set them all aside, as useless indications of the favour of God, by taking a shorter cut, and appealing at once to the direct witness of the Spirit.

These two verses might have been proved to be useless to Methodists in a shorter manner, if it were not our wish to give the true and positive meaning of every text. For though we were to allow that St. John spoke in those places of the Holy Spirit, which is the meaning of the word Spirit for which they here contend, yet they cannot prove from these texts the necessity of direct revelation. When we have the Spirit we have also his fruits; and on the contrary when we have

have the fruits, we have the Spirit; if therefore we are conscious of having the fruits, we may safely conclude that God hath given to us his Holy Spirit.

6. *Who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts*⁹. The two Sacraments are in general a seal and earnest of the Spirit; they are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace. These outward signs constitute a seal and earnest of the Spirit to us in particular, when they are accompanied with the fruits of the Spirit— with Repentance, Faith, Charity. But Christians in the Apostles days obtained a farther Seal and Earnest of the Spirit, which we cannot now expect. St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, thanks God that they were *enriched in all utterance and knowledge — — so that they came behind in no gift*¹. What these gifts were may be seen from the 12th chapter of the same Epistle. *Now there are diversities of gifts. but the same Spirit — And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all — But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another Faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.* Here is a particular enumeration of many extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit, most of which, singly, constituted a sufficient seal and earnest of the Spirit to Christians in the Apostle's days, that *all the promises of God in (Christ) are yea, and in him amen*².

All

⁹ 2 Cor. i. 22. ¹ 1 Cor. i. 5. 7. ² 2 Cor. i. 20.

All these are to be ranked among the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Even Faith, according to the sense in which it must be understood here, was given to some particular Christians only, as the Apostle's words prove. It signifies most probably that Faith, by which some of them knew what miracles they might attempt with success. But if Methodists should say, that all or any of those gifts are common to Christians in all times; and that, in particular, the *word of wisdom, of knowledge, and faith* may be a seal and earnest of the Spirit to us, in the same sense that they were to the first Christians; we shall see how much their opinion of them differs from that entertained by St. Paul. According to their Apostle, the earnest of the Spirit is so important, that without it "men do every thing to deserve everlasting destruction," but with it they are perfect. But St. Paul, to prevent our overvaluing extraordinary gifts, and to prepare the world for their entire suppression, *shews unto the Corinthians a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophesie, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*. This is a very important lesson for a Methodist.

But to return to the text. The Seal and Earnest of the Spirit was not the faith of the first Christians, but plainly distinct from it; for the Apostle says to the Ephesians, *In whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*. Nor can we suppose it was a direct witness of the Spirit and knowledge of our pardon, or the Apostle would not have said in this chapter, *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by*
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* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. see also Matt. vii. 22, 23.

the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. If he had already attained a direct witness of the Spirit and knowledge of his pardon, and intended to instruct the Corinthians that these were necessary, he would hardly omit to mention these circumstances when he proposed to inform them of the source of his rejoicing. It would appear strangely inconsistent that he should pass by unnoticed such an actual and stupendous fruition, and have recourse to a remote cause, which cannot exist without recollection, faith, and hope.

7. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*^u. This is a very favourite text with Methodists, and yet it proves by itself, that Faith neither is nor can be an immediate perception of any revelation. The word *Faith*, from the Greek *πιστις*, signifies belief, persuasion; this is the general acceptation of it in Scripture. It is indeed often used for the object of our belief, that is, the gospel at large; but that it is no where used for 'evidence without any deduction of reason,' will be allowed by all who assent to a self-evident proposition. The definition of Faith in this place will appear in all respects agreeable to the literal meaning of the word, when we restore the consistence of the first part of the text.

Faith in the original is called *ελπιζομενων υποσασις*, which is translated the substance of things hoped for, but in the margin *υποσασις* is translated, ground or confidence. The marginal reading is in every respect consistent, while the other contains a contradiction. The substance of a thing is the thing itself, if therefore Faith be the substance of things hoped for, then Faith and the things hoped for must be identically the same, which is manifestly impossible. The things hoped for are still in the womb
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^u Heb. xi. 1.

of time, such as, the calling in of the Jews and universal prevalence of the Gospel, and a resurrection to life. No one will say that such things as these are Faith. It is equally plain that Faith cannot be any immediate apprehension of them, for they do not yet exist. The angels know them not by intuition but by Faith only: for that a finite Being should have an inherent consciousness of what does not, and never did exist, is to all human conception a contradiction. The angels know not the time of the day of Judgment^w; and St. Peter says they desire to look into some of the mysteries of the Gospel^x. What therefore is denied to angels can hardly be the attribute of man. But though we had even the attributes of the Deity, yet the substance of things hoped for would imply a contradiction; for if we actually experienced things future or present, we could not hope for them.

We must therefore lay aside this translation, and adopt the marginal reading, which is in every respect consistent. In every place where *ὑποσχεσις* occurs in the Bible, except one, it is translated *confidence*^y. In this Epistle we read, *But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*^z. Compare this with the 14th verse, *For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of confidence (ὑποσχεσις) steadfast unto the end*. The same idea is often repeated. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end*^a. And again, five verses before the text, *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward*.

If it appears now that the marginal reading is that which should be adopted, then the first part
of

^w Matt. xxiv. 36. ^x 1 Pet. i. 12. ^y 2 Cor. ix. 4. xi. 17.
^z Heb. iii. 14. ^a Heb. vi. 6. ^b vi. 11.

of the definition of Faith agrees with the literal meaning of the word, and proves that it is not Sight. For it would be as absurd for us to say, we have confidence that two and two make four, as to say, we have confidence of what we know by immediate revelation. In like manner, it is contrary to all sense and propriety of words, and of scripture words in particular, to call the *things hoped for*, such as we absolutely see and know.

The second part of the definition declares as expressly as the first, that Faith is not an immediate revelation; but like the other it will require some illustration. *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.* The word *ελεγχος*, which we read *evidence*, is not to be met with in any other place in the Bible; we must therefore judge from the text itself whether it means the things themselves which bear evidence, or the evidence and conviction produced in our own minds; for the word will bear either of these interpretations.

According to the first interpretation, the definition will be expressed thus, *Faith is that thing or those things which bear evidence of things unseen.* The things unseen which are the objects of a Christian's faith are God — the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, his attributes of power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness, Heaven the reward of the righteous, and Hell the portion of the wicked, the existence of an innumerable number of angels and happy beings, and also the existence of wicked and malicious Spirits, the creation of the world, the fall of man and his redemption by Christ, the several facts recorded in the Bible, the grace of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. Now the things which bear evidence of these things unseen are the works of Creation, the Bible, and every thing which bears testimony of the Bible. St. Paul says, *the invisible things of (God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are*

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made, even his eternal power and Godhead^b. Hence it appears that the works of Creation are a sufficient proof of natural religion. And that there was sufficient external evidence for the Gospel is manifest from our Saviour's words. *Ye Hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time^c?* Every part of the gospel bears evidence to some one or more of those things unseen. St. Paul speaks of one evidence, where he says, *Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead^d.* Now, as in general the works of creation and the Bible, and to particularise one instance, the resurrection of Christ, bear evidence of the things unseen which are the objects of a Christian's faith; if therefore faith be defined, that which evidences the same unseen things, consequently Faith must be the works of Creation, the Bible, the resurrection of Christ, &c. If this definition be manifestly absurd, if Faith be a quality in us, and not external things or antient facts, we must reject the first meaning of the word evidence, and adopt the second, to which there can be no possible objection.

There is nothing in this second reading difficult, irrational, or unscriptural. *Faith is the conviction or persuasion of things unseen.* Though we do not meet with the word *ελεγχος* in any other place in the Bible, yet we frequently meet with the verb *ελεγχω* which is derived from it; and this verb is never used to express the giving or receiving intuitive evidence, but to express the act of producing or feeling conviction by means of sound argument.

Our Saviour asks, *which of you convinceth me of sin?*

^b Rom. i. 20. See Psalm xix. 1. Acts xiv. 17.

^c Luke xii. 56. Mat. xvi. 3.

^d Acts xvii. 31.

fin? St. Paul recommends that a Bishop should hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince (ελεγχειν) the gainsayers^f. This observation sufficiently secures us from the imputation of forcing an arbitrary construction on the words of the Apostle.

If we have now ascertained the true sense of the word ελεγχος, this text contains two as express declarations as we could desire, that Faith is not a sight of an immediate Revelation.

Few persons will guess by what means Mr. W. endeavours to elude the obvious meaning of the words of the text, and to wrest them to his purpose. He understands evidence in that sense which we have endeavoured to explode; but instead of supposing that the works of Creation or the Gospel bear evidence of things unseen, he attributes this evidence to intuitive perception. "Faith (says he in the beginning of his Appeal) is the demonstrative Evidence of things unseen, the supernatural Evidence of Things invisible, — — that divine Evidence, whereby the Spiritual Man discerneth GOD and the Things of GOD." It is not possible to advance greater contradictions. To see them more evidently, substitute his definition for Faith in the following places — *We walk by a demonstrative and supernatural Evidence of things unseen and by discerning God and the things of God, and not by Sight^g. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have* "had a demonstrative and supernatural evidence of things unseen^h."

Still he thinks he has another expedient to get rid of this contradiction — "Faith is the demonstrative and supernatural Evidence of things unseen by eyes of flesh or by any of our natural
G 2 " senses

^e * John viii. 46. ^f Tit. i. 9. see also Acts xviii. 28.
¹ Cor. xix. 24. James ii. 9. ^g 2 Cor. v. 7. ^h John xx. 29.

“senses or faculties,” but seen by “Spiritual Sensation.” If it be allowable to wrest Scripture at this rate, all the Heresies of all the Heretics since the creation may take shelter under it. Let the reader recollect the things unseen which are the objects of a Christian’s Faith, and he will confess, that he could argue with a man in the delirium of a fever with more probability of success, than he could with one who talks of his demonstrative and supernatural evidence of those things by Spiritual Sensation. St. Peter gives a general direction, *Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you with meekness and fear*¹. If a Methodist should attempt to comply with this precept, and should call his demonstrative and supernatural perception and sight of God and the things of God his Hope, what reason could he give for it, or who could understand his reason?

If this must be our idea of Faith and Hope, the whole word of God would be a perfect Chaos — *A confidence of things hoped for* is a demonstrative and supernatural evidence of God and the things of God by infallible sensation. This Spiritual Sensation *cometh by corporeal hearing*^k. *We are saved by this Spiritual Sensation, but this Spiritual Sensation which is seen is not Spiritual Sensation*^l. *Whom having not seen, ye see infallibly, in whom though now ye see him not, yet “seeing, feeling, hearing and “tasting,” him by Spiritual senses*^m, *Faith is a demonstrative sight of that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see*ⁿ. *No man hath seen God at any time*^o, yet Faith is an absolute sight of the invisible God^p by spiritual senses. It is needless to give any more instances of the

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

^k Rom. x. 17.

^l Rom. viii. 24.

^m 1 Pet. i. 8.

ⁿ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^o John i. 18.

^p 1 John iv. 12.

^q Col. i. 15.

^r 1 Tim. i. 17.

the confusion which Mr. W's illustration of Faith must produce in the whole Gospel.

His account of Faith is as contrary to reason and the opinions of all learned and intelligent men, as it is to Scripture. What Prophet or Apostle has there been, What person of note, or who beside himself and his disciples, who would not have answered the following questions in the same manner with Job, *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Behold I go forward but he is not there, and backward but I cannot perceive him, on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him^a. It appears weakness to dwell gravely upon this subject. We are astonished that a man in his senses, who is still a child of *dust—a worm*, should have the presumption to declare that he had a demonstrative and supernatural sensation of *the invisible God*. And we are no less astonished to see such a person maintain that unless a man should “see, hear, taste and feel God, the things of God, and indeed the whole invisible world, the entire system of things eternal by Spiritual senses, it would be good for him that he had never been born, for he must perish everlastingly^b.”

Methodists will catch at the fourth verse in this chapter, *By Faith Abel obtained witness that he was righteous*. But the witness which Abel obtained was an external one, *God testifying of his gifts*, perhaps sending down fire to consume his offering, as he did frequently on different occasions^c. If it was an internal

^a Job. xi. 7.

^b xxiii. 8, 9.

^c To be satisfied that this is a faithful abstract from his words and doctrine, read the four first pages of his Appeal, and the 6th page of his Farther Appeal. The turn which Mr. W. has given to the text is the Basis on which all the peculiar doctrines, of his Appeals are built; and therefore when we refute his construction of it, all those doctrines fall to the ground.

^d Gen. xv. 17. Lev. ix. 24. 1 Kings xviii. 38. 1 Chron. xxi. 26. 2 Chron. vii. 1.

ternal witness, it could not have excited Cain's envy. But whatever was the nature of his witness, it was on account of his Faith that he obtained it, so that his Faith and Witness were not one and the same thing.

This whole chapter confirms the illustration which we have given of the definition of Faith. *Through Faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* No man was present at this Creation, nor can any man understand it now as God himself does; but from natural reason and the revelation of the Bible, we have a persuasion of it founded on evidence.

The faith of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, &c, was their belief in God's promises. It is true they obtained revelations from God; but then their Faith was not their seeing and knowing those revelations; but their believing, and relying upon, the promises of God in consequence of them. For instance, *By Faith, Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac;* and his faith is thus described—*Accounting that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead.* But he had not a demonstrative and supernatural evidence of this circumstance, or he could not have faith in it; and his knowledge of it would have been matter of necessity, for which he could have neither merit nor reward.

8. There is another verse in this chapter which Mr. W. applies in the same place and on many occasions to the support of his idea of Faith. *By Faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.* The most ignorant person sees at once that this is a figurative seeing, for the literal sense implies a contradiction; yet Mr. W. understands it literally, for says he, By the "spiritual eye of the new-born soul every true believer in God seeth him who is invisible." If we may apply in this manner the figurative

figurative style of scripture, we need never be at a loss for argument and novelty. That Moses had not a sight of God appears from his own relation, or may appear from this very text. The time when it is imagined he had a sight of God, was when he desired to see the glory of the Lord. This was long after he had forsaken Egypt, and was in danger from Pharaoh. But he had faith, and as Methodists must say, a sight of God before he had any divine commission. *For by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.* — He believed there was a just God who would reward every sincere and conscientious endeavour to please him. When afterward he *forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King, he endured as seeing him who is invisible* — as his unshaken constancy was owing to his faith in God, who, though invisible had incontestibly interposed to effect the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt; as he relied on him accordingly and studied to please him. We see now what little room there is for supposing that his faith was an actual sight of the invisible God.

9. *To give knowledge of Salvation to his people by the remission of their sins*^u. There is nothing in those words but the superficial sound, which can answer the purpose of Methodists. They were spoken of John the Baptist by his father Zachariah, who foretold by the Holy Ghost that his son would point out to the Jews the means whereby they were to be saved. His office is described by the four Evangelists. He was the forerunner of the Messiah, sent to prepare the way before him, to give notice of his immediate manifestation^x, and to preach the doctrine

^u Luke i. 77. ^x Matt. iii. 3. 11. ii. 10. Mark i. 2, 3, 7.
 Luke iii. 4, 16. John i. 15 to 36. Acts xix. 4.

doctrine of repentance as a necessary condition of the forgiveness of sins¹: not that repentance was to take away our sins by its own efficacy, for he attributes this effect to Christ alone; — *behold, says he, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*². Consequently the knowledge of Salvation which he was to give to God's people was, that Christ would be *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that would obey him*: but no one surely will say, it was part of his office to give any one a demonstrative particular knowledge of his own Salvation.

10. *It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance*³. It no way affects our main question whether the word impossible in this place be pushed to its utmost signification or not; almost all persons agree that it means only extremely difficult and unlikely. We shall therefore proceed to examine the purport of the other expressions in the text. *Those who were once enlightened*, and those who had *received the knowledge of the truth*, appear to be synonymous expressions in every respect. The Apostle makes use of the latter in the 10th chapter, wherein he gives nearly the same opinion as he does in the text. *For of we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*. In St. Peter's second Epistle there is an expression of the same import, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them*. The only question therefore concerning this point

¹ Matt. iii. 2, 8. Luke iii. 3, 8.

² Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

³ John i. 29.

point is;—how were the first Christians enlightened? or by what means did they receive the knowledge of the truth, or of the way of righteousness? It depended in the first instance on their own will, whether they would receive the truth or not. Our Saviour in the language of prophecy, upbraids the Jews with their stubbornness in resisting all fair means of conviction, while he applauds the teachable temper of his disciples. *This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear^b.* In the next place the first Christians must have been instructed in the truth before they could have received it. St. Paul asks, *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? — so then faith cometh by hearing^c.* Thus Cornelius, though there was a miraculous interposition of Providence in his favour, did not receive the knowledge of the truth by immediate inspiration, but was referred to St. Peter for instruction^d. But what principally contributed to their receiving the Gospel were, the internal characters of truth, the completion of prophecies, and the number of miracles with which they saw it supported. There was nothing farther wanting but the Grace of God. *I have planted, says St. Paul, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase^e.* Those means were fully sufficient in order to their being enlightened, or to their receiving the knowledge of the truth; and as to the necessity of any farther means for Christians in general, Scripture is silent,

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^b Matt. xiii. 15, 16. See also John iii. 19, 20, 21.

^c Rom. x. 14, 15, 17.

^d Acts x. See also viii. to 37.

^e 1 Cor. iii. 6.

The two following expressions—*have tasted of the heavenly gift, and, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, must confessedly be applicable to the miraculous effusions of the Holy Ghost; and if it no where appears that these miraculous effusions conveyed a sight of the Spirit by means of spiritual senses, it is much more unlikely that they are given now when miracles have ceased.

In the next expression—*have tasted the good word of God*, there appears but little ground to build upon or argue from. The most natural inference from it is, that the Apostle supposed many persons had seen the excellence of the Gospel, and had felt satisfaction and joyful hope from regulating their lives by its precepts.

The last expression—*have tasted*—*the powers of the world to come*, is translated in such a manner as will be apt to mislead injudicious readers. They may imagine it refers to the state of the righteous in Heaven, and therefore that spiritual senses, and a sight of God, which are part of the powers of that future time, may be here implied: whereas the time alluded to is the Gospel age, and not that which is to follow the resurrection. The words in the original are, *τι μελλοντος αιωνος*, of the future age; by which expression the Gospel age is characterised in the Septuagint version of Isaiah. Christ is called therein *πατηρ μελλοντος αιωνος* *The Father of the future age*¹. Agreeable thereto the Gospel dispensation is called in this Epistle *οικεμενην την μελλουσαν*²; and Christ is called in the 9th chapter, *αρχιερευς των μελλοντων αγαθων*, *an High-Priest of good things to come*; not surely the High-Priest of the future state in Heaven, but of the Christian dispensation upon earth. The office of an High-Priest, besides exhorting and instructing, was to intercede and offer sacrifices for the people. Now
Christ

¹ Isaiah ix. 6.

² ii. 5.

Christ need not intercede and offer himself a second time for those who *have already attained the resurrection* to eternal life. It is under the Gospel dispensation only that he exercises his Priestly office. We read in the 8th chapter, *now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry than (Moses) by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises*; consequently μελλοντων αγαθων must relate to the good things promised under the Gospel. The Apostle must have used the word μελλοντος in the same sense in the text; for he might very well have supposed that numbers of Christians had seen many of the wonders which accompanied the Gospel, and had shared in the miraculous effusions of the Holy Ghost; but he could not have supposed or inculcated that any man, in this life, had laid aside his *natural body, sown in weakness*, and had put on a *spiritual body raised in power*^a, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body¹, able to behold the face of our heavenly Father², since we see in a number of places of Scripture that all those privileges are reserved for the children of the Resurrection³. *It doth not yet appear*, says St. John, *what we shall be*, but we know that when he (the Father) shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is^m.

We may now give the paraphrase of the text—*It appears almost impossible for those who had once received the knowledge of the truth and of the way of righteousness, and had shared in the miraculous effusions of the Holy Ghost, and had seen the excellence and miraculous powers of the Gospel, and practised its precepts, if they apostatise from the Faith and sin wilfully, again to raise themselves anew to repentance.* If this be an accurate and fair paraphrase, it will be impossible to prove from the text

^a 1 Cor. xv. 42 to 54.
10. xxii. 30.

¹ Luke xx. 36.

² Phil. iii. 21.

³ Matt. xviii.

^m 1 John iii. 2.

text the necessity of a direct knowledge of the favour of God by Spiritual Senses.

11. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ^a.* The Apostle is confessedly speaking of himself in this and the two following chapters; and that the text in particular is to be applied to him appears from its connection with the preceding verse. *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts*—hath revealed to us the Gospel of his Son, to give the light or rather to promote^o the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.—the knowledge of the power, wisdom, holiness and goodness of God, as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ—in his incarnation, life, conversation, example, miraculous power, death, resurrection, and ascension.

12. It will be objected that the last verse of the last chapter, which is applicable to other christians beside the Apostle, has the same meaning. — *But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.* There is no allusion here to any direct Revelation as there is in the former text. Since the Apostle says he received the Gospel by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and that it pleased God to reveal his Son in him that he might preach him among the Heathen^p; therefore when he says that God had shined in his heart to promote the light of the knowledge of the glory of God; it is plain that he speaks of this revelation. But in this text there is no allusion to this

^a 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^p Gal. i. 12, 15, 16.

^o πρὸς φωτισμὸν.

this circumstance; and the effect mentioned here is the end, for which the gospel was miraculously revealed to him. God had shined in his heart to promote the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. The Apostle accordingly preached the Gospel, proved his commission and his doctrines by miracles and the soundest reason, remarks that there was a vail over the hearts of the Jews in the reading of the old testament, but observes to the Corinthians, *we all with open face*—having the vail removed which prevented the Israelites from seeing that Christ is the end of the law^a, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*—beholding the greatness and goodness of God as reflected in the glorious gospel of Christ^b, *are changed into the same image*—into a likeness of him, *from glory to glory*—which will exalt us from glory here to glory eternal, *as by the spirit of the Lord*—through the sanctifying influence of God's Holy Spirit.

13. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit*^c. In this text St. Paul speaks of himself, and not of Christians in general, as is evident from the whole chapter. The things which God had revealed to him were all the mysteries of the gospel; that *Christ Jesus is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*^d.

What imposes upon ignorant persons, and aids the attempt to impose in others, is, that the Apostle speaks of himself as often in the plural as in the singular number. They must be very ignorant indeed who cannot distinguish where he speaks of himself and of Christians in general. But though we were never to make this distinction, and were to suppose that all those persons whom the Apostle addressed

^a verse 13. Rom. x. 4.

^b 1 Cor. ii. 10.

^c 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^d i. 30.

addressed obtained the same privileges which he did himself; yet Methodists would still have the most important part of their doctrine to prove; for if no one can be saved without all the privileges of the first Christians, it will follow that no one can be saved without the gift of tongues, which even Methodists pretend not to have. If we were even taught in the Bible that the first Christians not only did, but that all must obtain as high privileges as St. Paul obtained; still, according to their doctrine, no mortal could be saved, unless he were to be called out of the world at the very instant he should see Christ.

14. In St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians ^a Methodists imagine they can discover the whole of their doctrine, though they should be deprived of every text beside — This prayer begins thus, *That (God) would grant you — to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.* The former part of these words can prove nothing for them, unless they chuse to say, that God by his Spirit [cannot strengthen us with might—cannot act upon our affections, encrease our love and gratitude, and strengthen our fears and hopes, without giving us at the same time a direct witness of the Spirit. They will hardly prove what appears to our first conceptions so unworthy both of God and man. But they will conceive better hopes from the expression of, *The inner man*: they will say, this must be that part of a man's identity which consists in spiritual senses. If so, the very worst men also must have spiritual senses; for David says of them, *their inward parts are very wickedness*^b. Our Saviour desires us to *beware of false prophets which come in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*^c; and he tells the Pharisees, *your inward part*

^a Ephes. iii. 14 — — 20.

^b Psalm v. 9.

^c Matt. vii. 15.

part is full of ravening and wickedness¹. If therefore wicked men may have inward thoughts and affections without spiritual senses, so may also the good.

The next petition is sufficient to secure the whole prayer from a fanatical interpretation, *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*: That is, *by faith and not by sight*; and *faith is the evidence or conviction of things not seen*. No doubt St. Paul would look on this part of his prayer as fulfilled, when he could say of the Ephesians what St. Peter says of other Christians, *whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*².

St. Paul prays farther, *That ye being rooted and grounded in love*. There is no room to suppose a direct witness in these words. If it should be said that *love* implies it; the last quotation from St. Peter will refute the assertion. The Apostle proceeds, *may be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*. The different views in which we may behold the love of Christ are here most happily expressed. It is represented as extending in a lateral direction to signify the number of its objects, namely all men in all ages and nations, and perhaps worlds to us unknown. The love of Christ is represented as deep, to shew his astonishing condescension and goodness to his lost and undeserving creatures; and it is represented as high, to give us some idea of its efficacy and greatness, and of the infinite Majesty of that Being who thus regards us. The question which occurs now between us and Methodists on this petition is, How are we to comprehend this love? is it by spiritual sensation, or by our natural reason and understanding? If any one should say he has an apprehension of it by the former means independent

¹ Luke xi. 39.

² 1 Pet. ii. 8.

independent of the other, we are no way concerned with his reveries until he can explain them. But it is self-evident that, with the assistance of the Gospel, we may have a knowledge of the love of Christ by our natural understanding in the same manner as we may know the love of a parent or a friend; and our affections and passions may be inflamed with devotion and gratitude as truly and, as should naturally be expected, more powerfully toward our Redeemer than toward any human being. We cannot indeed with our natural faculties comprehend and know the love of Christ perfectly; and the Apostle asserts as much, for says he, it *passeth knowledge*, that is, we *know* it but *in part*; and even all our knowledge *now* is but *in part*; for the Apostle to check our presumption declares, *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, that is completely, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know^a*. But the love of Christ would not pass our knowledge if we had spiritual senses, for when we shall obtain them, we *shall know even as also we are known^b*.

The Apostle thus concludes his prayer, *That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God*. In those words St. Paul does not pray that the Ephesians might equal God in his Attributes of knowledge and power; for that would be an improper request, and would betray a like spirit with the ambition commonly attributed to the fallen Angels; but he prayed that they might resemble him in his moral perfections of Holiness and Benevolence. He is pressing on them the observance of these duties in particular, when he exhorts them in the fifth chapter, *Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children*. Here it will be asked, "Do not this prayer and precept imply perfection?" We answer, they do not; for the perfection of the rule argues no perfection in the copy; and a good man will always pray for the
utmost

^a 1 Cor. iii. 2.

^b xiii. 12.

utmost possible conformity in all people to the perfect morality of the Gospel, though he should consider absolute perfection as unattainable. Our Saviour desires us to *be perfect*, and yet says he, *there is none good or perfect but God alone*; and we pray according to his direction, *Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*, though no one has seen this prayer fulfilled in a single instance, except in the person of Christ himself. It will be farther asked, "Is not this denial of perfection a discouragement from aiming at it?" It may indeed be mortifying to the pride of man; but it can have no bad effect on his morals, and it leaves their full force to all the motives to religious improvement: whereas whoever flatters people with the notion that they are *already perfect*, teaches them neither to *forget those things which are behind*, nor to *reach forth unto those things which are before*, but deludes them with the possession of a deceitful goal, and consequently remits to them the indispensable duty of always *pressing toward the mark* — of their high calling. This conduct is a still greater temptation to pride than to negligence. It is a vain pretence for Methodists to say, they inculcate humility as a necessary part of perfection; for when they say that all men with a direct witness of their pardon are perfect, and that most of themselves have this witness, they must indeed be more than human if they can be entirely free from spiritual pride.

They will still hope for some countenance from the doxology which follows the prayer, *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us — to Him be glory, &c.* It is usual with them to argue in defence of their system by asking, "Would you limit the power of God?" On the same principle any preposterous scheme of religion might be defended. *God is able of stones to*

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raise

raise up obedient children^a; and yet we should consider that man's intellects as much out of order who would hence conclude that stones are rational beings endued with moral goodness. But after all, they are the persons who limit the power of God; for we say, God can justify us without acquainting us with his mind by direct revelation, and this they think impossible. God *can* do all things which do not imply a contradiction; but he *will* do only such things as in his infinite wisdom he sees fit to be done. "But, is it unreasonable to suppose that God will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, when the Apostle magnifies him for being *able* to act in this manner?" No one will say it is; nay, St. Paul's praise implies that God will certainly confer on us inconceivable happiness if we endeavour to please him; for if this be not implied, his power to do so is a barren sentiment, which could never excite our praise. Here it will be said, this concession grants every thing, for the Apostle evidently alludes to spiritual senses. So we say too; for the highest enjoyment, which we can conceive any man ever to have had by means of human faculties, falls very far short of what the Apostle holds forth for our encouragement. Methodists imagine now they have gained their point, for they will say, St. Paul determines the enjoyment of these senses to the present time, *according to the power that worketh in us*. Here begins their mistake, for he alludes to a different exercise of power. Whatever may be the knowledge and happiness implied in the former part of the verse, neither the Apostle nor the Ephesians had already attained to them; for the mode of expression points them out as designed for them in future, and they were abundantly above all they asked or thought. Consequently the power which actually worked in them must be distinct from that which God would exert,

^a Luke iii. 8.

exert, of which they had as yet no experience. The first manifested itself in many miraculous gifts, and in the conversion and holiness of their lives; the other they believed would take place when *Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body**. This distinction will appear more plain and necessary when we give the paraphrase of the text, both as Methodists would have it, and also according to what appears the true sense of it—"Unto him who is able to give us spiritual senses, above all that we ask or think, according the power that has already given us spiritual senses." This is downright nonsense and contradiction. But the following paraphrase places the text in a clear light. *Now unto him that is able and willing to do exceeding abundantly by giving us new powers and senses, above all that we either ask, as not deeming them necessary for us at present, or above all that we think, as having no conception of them; of which ability and inclination in him he has given us an earnest by the power that now worketh in us, converting us from sin to righteousness, filling our hearts with love of God and our neighbour, enabling us to perform miracles, and to rejoice in tribulations—to Him &c.* It is presumed this paraphrase will stand the closest examination; and if so, it affords an unanswerable argument against the necessity of spiritual senses.

Though we have examined this passage minutely, yet a single comprehensive view of it might have shewn, that Methodists could not prove from it the most important part of their doctrine; for admitting their own construction of the whole, they could only infer from it, that direct revelations through the medium of spiritual senses are desirable, and in their own nature attainable, but not that they are indispensable to Justification. If indeed, beside the

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Grace

* Phil. iii. 21.

Grace of God, the prayer implied only moral and religious attainments, such as—fortitude in the profession of the Gospel in opposition to the vicious maxims and practices of the world—an adherence to its precepts—gratitude for our Redemption—a just sense of its value—holiness and charity, these no doubt are essential for all who have the light of the Gospel. But if the prayer implied particular privileges, such as—spiritual senses, experiencing the presence of Christ, distinguishing the operation of his love, and seeing, hearing tasting and feeling God; common sense will tell us that these things, how desirable soever they may be, cannot be the conditions of the pardon of sins, and of the favour of God; for they are neither moral, virtuous, nor religious attainments, but purely abstracted and metaphysical. It is irrational to call them the requisites to obtain the reward of holiness, since they constitute the reward itself. To make the privileges themselves the condition of obtaining them; or to say, the experience of Angels is an essential condition to induce God to reward us with the experience of Angels, is very absurd doctrine. Allowing therefore that the Apostle had prayed for these privileges, such a prayer would not prove them to be essential to justification; — or if it would, there is the same proof that *many Prophets and righteous men who desired to see and hear the Saviour of the world, are all damned, because they were denied this privilege*^f.

14. For

^f Matt. xiii. 17.

The omission of such a remarkable passage as this prayer of St. Paul, on a former occasion, afforded no small triumph to Methodists. While the undisturbed application of it was left with them, they imagined they might securely persist in making privileges not duties the essential conditions of justification. There are some speculative errors which may interfere but in a small degree with the duties of a Christian. For the sake of these, the
 Author

14. *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.* When Methodists are beaten from one post to another, and find every other ground untenable, they take their last stand behind this text. Who the natural and spiritual man is, and what the things of the Spirit of God are, which one rejects and the other receives, St. Paul has given us sufficient intimation in this and the preceding chapter. He tells the Corinthians that Christ had sent him to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. —Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. He proceeds in the same strain in this chapter. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. —And my speech and my preaching was

Author would never have entered into controversial writing. But when an error has a natural tendency to render us shockingly uncharitable, and to fill us with despair or spiritual pride, it then becomes the duty of all good men to expose it. The belief of the attainableness here of an insight into the invisible world by spiritual senses, may be an error of the first kind; but the belief that all are damned who do not obtain this view in the present state, is evidently an error of the second description.

was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. And says he in the verse before the text, *which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Hence it is plain that the things of the Spirit of God which the natural man receiveth not, are the doctrines of *the Gospel* and particularly *the preaching of the cross*, for the Apostle had determined not to know any thing among the Corinthians *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*. It appears also that the natural man is the person, to whom the Gospel and the doctrine of Christ crucified is foolishness, who expects to see the mysteries of the Gospel proved by eloquent and learned disputations, upon principles of natural reason, independent on all miraculous attestations of the Spirit. It is equally plain that the Spiritual man is the person to whom the doctrine of *Christ crucified* is so far from being a scandal or foolishness, that he sees in it the wonderful *power and wisdom of God*.

The text therefore may be thus paraphrased, 'The fastidious philosopher does not admit the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, for it appears to him unworthy and irrational; nor is it possible for him ever to find it out by his own reason, because it can be learned only from Revelation, nor can it be credited but upon the testimony which the Spirit has given to the Gospel.'

It must be granted that we have advanced nothing respecting this text which is not true; and that we have also given the whole truth, we have the authority of all the Commentators, except Mr. W. who has struck out a new path, and pretends to discover some additional and deeper meaning in it. We suppose

suppose he borrowed some of the words of this text, where he says, in the beginning of his Appeal, "Faith is that divine Evidence whereby the Spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God," which things "are not perceivable by eyes of flesh or by any of our natural senses or faculties." Accordingly he calls Faith the "Spiritual eye, ear, palate and feeling of the soul." This doctrine is so curious that few persons will think he intends to teach it literally, unless they see it farther corroborated by his own words. He writes in the same Appeal, "It is certainly necessary that you have *senses* capable of discerning objects of this kind: not those only which are called *natural senses*, — — but *spiritual senses*, exercised to discern Spiritual Good and Evil. It is necessary that you have — — a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be *the evidence* of things not seen, as your bodily senses are of visible things; to be the avenues to the invisible world — — And till you have these *internal senses* — — you can have no *apprehension* of Divine Things, no *Idea* of them at all. Nor consequently, till then can you either *judge truly* or *reason justly* concerning them; seeing your reason has no ground whereupon to stand, no materials to work upon — — — As you cannot *reason* concerning colours, if you have no *natural sight*: — — so you cannot *reason* concerning spiritual things, if you have no *spiritual sight*; because all your Ideas received by your *outward senses* are of a different kind — — Yea far more different from those received by *Faith* or *Internal Sensation*, than the Idea of Colour from that of Sound^b."

Thus

^b This passage, with what immediately precedes it, forms the most extraordinary composition which we have ever seen. He proves sensibly enough the necessity of reason in religion; for
" both

Thus he sets up a spiritual tyranny over our consciences more haughty and unlimited than that of the Pope. The Pope denies that any one ought to exercise his private reason in opposition to his Church: and Mr. W. says that without spiritual senses we cannot reason concerning divine things, nor have any Idea of them at all; — that we are more incapable of discerning spiritual good and evil, than a blind man is of discerning colours. Yet he has been himself so senseless or inconsistent as to preach to those brutes or machines, and to threaten them with damnation, if they do not adopt and experience his notion of Faith. He requires us to yield ourselves implicitly to his guidance, and to follow him blind-fold; for he premises, that we can have no Idea at all of Divine things, that we can neither judge truly nor reason justly concerning them. It is not easy to say who discovers most infatuation; the person who makes such a requisition, or the person who complies with it. *And if the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch*¹.

It would be endless to produce all the texts of Scripture which confute this position, that we must be totally blind to all gospel truths without Spiritual Senses. There is scarce a text which would not do it; or if there were no other than the following, it would be sufficient. It was to unbelievers that our Lord

“ both our Lord and his Apostles continually reasoned with their
 “ opposers — But,” says he again “ your *reasoning justly* on this
 “ subject, presupposes true judgments already formed. And you
 “ know, that before it is possible for you to form a true judgment,
 “ it is absolutely necessary that you have a *clear apprehension*
 “ of the things of God. And it is certainly necessary that you
 “ have spiritual senses capable of discerning objects of this kind,
 “ and till ye have these internal senses, you can have no idea at
 “ all of divine things, nor till then can you either judge truly or
 “ reason justly concerning them.” The reader will form his own
 opinion of this abstract.

¹ Luke vi. 39.

Lord addressed himself when he said; — *Yea and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right* *?

On the supposition that we may obtain these spiritual senses, and that we can have no idea at all of the things of God proposed to us in the Gospel without them; the Bible must remain a dead letter, of no imaginable use to any person whatsoever. It certainly can be of no use to that person, who from radical defect, is more incapable of understanding the religion of Christ, than a man born blind is of knowing the nature of colours. Nor can it be of the smallest use to him who can “see God” and the things of God, and can feel the whole “invisible world — the entire system of things eternal.” The Bible could be of no more service to such a person in giving him an understanding of the things of God, than the testimony of witnesses would be serviceable to convince him that he exists.

If we were to admit Mr. W's doctrine of spiritual senses, no Heresie which would take refuge under it could possibly be refuted by reason or Scripture; but unconditional election and reprobation, a Heresie the most pregnant with mischief, must be a certain consequence, notwithstanding that he does not profess to teach it. If God gives spiritual senses to some persons and refuses them to others, none of whom can previously have any idea of spiritual good and evil, who therefore must all have exactly the same moral qualifications, that is none at all; if the possession of these senses imply present salvation, and the absence of them a state of damnation; — then this is the most unqualified, unconditional election and reprobation which can be imagined, confounding all our ideas of God's justice and goodness.

We

We are no where in Scripture desired to obtain spiritual senses. Such a command would be a mockery as Methodists must acknowledge; for Mr. W. asks in his first Appeal, "Can you give yourself this Faith? Is it now in your power to see, or hear, or taste, or feel God?—Is there any power in your soul, whereby you can either discern (Spirits) or him that created them? — — You know it is not — — It is the free gift of God which he bestows not on those who are — — holy — — but on the ungodly and unholy." These are what he calls in the next paragraph his "fundamental principles." If therefore a command to obtain spiritual senses would be a mockery, consequently there is no such command; and those people are deluded who agitate and afflict themselves because they do not obtain them; for surely no one who believes in the revelation of the Gospel can say with consistence, that any quality is essential to free us from the wrath of God and to secure his favour, which that Gospel no where desires us to obtain. It would be equally absurd, according to Mr. W's. fundamental principles, for any inspired writer to desire us to repent and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, in order to prevail upon God to give us spiritual senses; for these, as he teaches, are always bestowed without any conditions; unless being ungodly and unholy, without any good thing, and fit only for everlasting destruction may be called conditions.

We can find but one place in Scripture which expresses so much as a doubt of spiritual senses having ever existed on this side the grave. When St. Paul says he *knew a man in Christ*, that is himself, who *above fourteen years ago was caught up into the third Heaven*, where he *heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful (or possible) for man to utter*; he declares twice he knew not *whether he was in the body or out of the body*¹. This is a sufficiently plain declaration,

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

claration, that he knew not whether he was witness to this revelation by natural or spiritual senses. We must conclude from this that at all other times he knew he was in the body, and enjoyed none but natural senses. Yet Mr. W. says that spiritual senses are certainly necessary; for Faith, according to his Idea, is nothing less than the perfect enjoyment of them, without which we cannot be saved. Nay farther, St. Paul magnifying his Apostleship by naming his highest vision and revelation, which happened fourteen years before, says that he knew not whether he was witness to it by bodily senses or not, yet that he neither did nor could see God^m. but according to Mr. W's gospel, every moment in which we do not see God, and feel the entire system of things eternal by more than bodily senses, we are in a state of damnation.

Perhaps Methodists will have the candour to acknowledge that we have now produced those texts, on which they depend most to prove the necessity of direct Revelationⁿ: if therefore we have refuted their construction of these texts, all doubts respecting the consistency of Scripture, upon this subject, must be removed; and we may then safely presume, that their doctrine is contrary to it. That it is also contrary to common sense, will be almost universally admitted. Every other text might be vindicated from their perversion with equal ease; but any farther attempt of this kind must appear unnecessary; for if Scripture has been proved to be consistent with itself in those places most liable to be thought otherwise, no one can pretend that it is not equally so in every other place. When the cause of our Justification is attributed solely to the blood of Christ; and when the conditions are declared in such a number of places

^m 1 Tim. vi. 16.

ⁿ That there is no text in the old Testament which can imply the necessity of a direct Revelation appears from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke xvi. 19—31.

places to be repentance, faith or a belief of the Gospel which worketh by love, obedience to God's commandments, love of God and our neighbour; consequently no text can be found to prove that we cannot be saved without a direct knowledge of our salvation by an infallible sight of God.—And when Hope is so often commended and declared to be the only hold by which we at present grasp salvation; when Faith and Hope are put in opposition to Sight and certain knowledge; it is a direct contradiction to Scripture to say, that absolute knowledge is essential to Justification.

All this is so plain, that every one who is not prejudiced, must long since have every doubt on the subject removed. Some persons indeed have so weak an understanding that they dare not trust to it, in judging of the plainest texts of Scripture; but imagine it is more safe for them to trust to their inward feelings. Others will not endure the thought of any information which might deprive them of much visionary delight; and may be offended by every attempt made to undeceive them. And it is to be feared a few have determined beforehand not to be convinced, from their reluctance to confess that they have been for some length of time under a delusion. It would be of infinite service to all such persons to recollect an observation, which all parties are equally bound to admit; and which, hitherto, no Christian has avowedly contradicted — that the doctrines of Scripture are plain to be understood, in proportion to their importance. Thus, men of all capacities may see plainly inculcated therein, the goodness wisdom and greatness of God, and his care of all his creatures; that mankind was redeemed by Christ; and that through his merits God will accept our sincere, though imperfect endeavours; they may learn from it the necessity of a good life, of humility, of prayer, of faith hope and charity, of grace, the doctrine of a future reward for the
righteous,

righteous, and of future punishment for the wicked. As those things are taught with the utmost perspicuity, therefore we must conclude that they are of the utmost importance. Now, if Mr. W's doctrines concerning Faith were true, it will be admitted, that they are of more weight than all the other doctrines in the Bible put together; therefore we should expect to see them taught at least as avowedly and unequivocally. But can this be pretended with the least plausibility? Can it be said, that the necessity of knowing the forgiveness of our sins, by means of a direct spiritual sensation of God, is taught so evidently, that we must either admit this doctrine, or deny our Bible; as the like alternative may be safely proposed to us on the foregoing articles? Scripture, so far from asserting this necessity, denies expressly that any such knowledge is ever obtained. Can it be said that *Faith, Belief, Hope, Expectation, Confidence, Trust*, signify in Scripture the enjoyment of the invisible world by spiritual senses, and a direct knowledge of our Salvation? Methodists may assert this if they please; but as Roman Catholics treat Transubstantiation, they must struggle very hard to believe it. It is impossible but they must have doubts on the subject; and if they have doubts, when by every art they warm their imaginations and inflame their passions, avoiding all explanation; a little cool reflection must reduce them to despair, while they retain their prejudices; or will be the means, by God's blessing, of curing them of their prejudices altogether. Mr. W. maintains, and Methodists, without foreseeing [the consequence, contend warmly for the same, that we cannot see his doctrine plainly in Scripture without Experience; that is, without the spiritual senses in dispute. But with our natural reason and senses we can discover in it the above stated sublime truths and doctrines. Consequently, even a Methodist must acknowledge these to be infinitely more plain to the capacities

capacities of all men. He must therefore grant, according to the principle laid down, that though his doctrine were true, yet it must be of little consequence; and if of little consequence, then of none at all, a mere imposition, for look into the doctrine itself, and if true, no other will appear of consequence when compared with it^o.

If you are not yet satisfied, look into any part of the New Testament, and consider whether the necessity of a direct knowledge of justification by spiritual senses can be consistent with a single page of it. If "all religion be empty shew, but perfection by "immediate inspiration, and the supernatural knowledge of God"^p consequently, any part of the Gospel which does not prove these points, or tend toward them, must be superfluous; and yet we cannot discover the most distant intimation of them in any of those discourses and occasional instructions, wherein our Saviour speaks of the conditions of the divine favour, and of the causes of our condemnation. Whom does he pronounce blessed^q? Who is like the wise man who builds upon a rock^r? What is the main design of the law and the prophets^s? How may the disciples of Christ be known^t? Who shall be judged with severity^u? Who shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven^v? Who shall be humbled, and who exalted^w? What are the weightier matters of the law^x? Which is the first commandment

^o Rather than allow this conclusion, some Methodists go so far as to deny that we can have a capacity, without spiritual senses, for discovering or understanding any scripture doctrine whatsoever.

^p Farther Appeal.

^q Matt. v. 3 to 11. xi. 6. Luke xi. 28. xii. 37. xiv. 14.

^r Matt. vii. 24. Luke vi 27 to 49.

^s Matt. vii. 12. xxii. 40.

^t John xiii. 35. Matt. vii. 20.

^u Matt. vii. 2. Mark iv. 24.

^v Matt. vii. 21.

^w Matt. xxiii. 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.

^x Matt. xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.

commandment of all, and which the second^r? What are the conditions of entering into life^s? For what things will Christ reward every man at the day of judgment^a? Who love Christ and are his friends, and abide in his love^b? Whom does he regard as his nearest relations^c? Whom will he confess, and whom deny at the Day of Judgment^d? Whom does he call least, and whom greatest in the kingdom of Heaven^e? What is the new commandment which he has given his disciples^f? Who shall be condemned and disowned by him at the day of Judgment^g? Who shall be beaten with few stripes, and who with many^h? Who shall find rest for their soulsⁱ? Who shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and who to the resurrection of damnation^k? For what things are men applauded, who shall be adjudged to go into life eternal; and for what condemned, who shall go away into everlasting punishment^l?

All those questions and many more of the same kind we may see resolved with a plainness not to be surpassed. It would now be as reasonable to attribute to our Saviour every Chimera of the Heathen Philosophers, every thing in short concerning which he was silent, as to maintain that the meaning of his doctrine, where he declares the conditions of Justification and the causes of our condemnation, was, that we could not perform one of those conditions, nor avoid doing every thing to expose ourselves to everlasting destruction, without spiritual senses, a fight

^r Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39. Mark xii. 28, 29, 30, 31.

^s Matt. xix. 17. Luke x. 28.

^a Matt. xvi. 27.

^b John xiv. 15, 21, 23. xv. 10, 14.

^c Matt. xii. 50. Mark iii. 35. Luke viii. 21.

^d Matt. x. 32, 33. Mark viii. 38. Luke xii. 8, 9.

^e Matt. v. 19. xviii. 4.

^f John xiii. 34. xv. 12.

^g Matt. vii. 23. xiii. 41, 42. Luke xiii. 27.

^h Luke xii. 47, 48.

ⁱ Matt. xi. 28, 29.

^k John v. 29.

^l Matt. xxv. 31 to 46.

fight of God and of our salvation; and that these alone would make us perfect. The reverse of all this appears with as much plainness, as a person fond of truth and common sense can require; and perhaps, it is on account of this plainness, that some persons consider those parts of the Gospel to which we have referred, as unworthy much attention; or if they do attend to them, it is only to endeavour to find out some hidden meaning in them. They delight more in endless contentions *about words to no profit*¹, than they do in the plain truths of the Gospel. St. Paul says, *Now the end of the commandment is Charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; from which some having swerved, have turned aside to vain jangling*^m. *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings*ⁿ.

In addition to *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, let us consider the words of his Apostles, and see whether they teach, that we are justified by the supernatural knowledge of God and our Salvation; and that without these every thing beside is pretence and sin. Instancing a few places only, would be doing injustice to a thousand places, all utterly inconsistent with such a wild hypothesis. However the two following are produced, lest the reader should dislike the trouble of a long research. *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*^o. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that*

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 14.
² vi. 3, 4.

^m 1 Tim. i. 5.
ⁿ Acts x. 34, 35.

that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil — but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good.*

Mr. W. endeavours to extricate himself from many inconsistencies, by making a distinction between the conditions of present and final Justification. This evasion requires little notice, as it is entirely a Gospel of his own invention. The Scriptures say not a word respecting any such distinction; but the same conditions are mentioned throughout; as they are in the two places just recited. At any time when a man's faith and repentance are carried to that degree, that he is justified through the merits of Christ; if he were to be called out of the world that instant, he must be finally justified; and if a man should die without being justified, or having forfeited his title to it, he can never be justified. If neither of these positions can be denied, it is idle to make a distinction between the terms of present and final Justification.

But this distinction, when examined, appears to be no distinction at all. He calls Experience the condition of present, and Holiness the condition of final Justification. But he denies the possibility of our being holy without Experience, that we can avoid doing every thing to deserve everlasting destruction; while he maintains that the possession of it makes men perfect. Therefore he must be reduced to maintain, in opposition to the whole Bible, that Experience is an indispensable condition of present and final Justification.

If we have now given a true account of the peculiar doctrine of Methodists, it will appear wonderful how it could have got any footing in the world. This circumstance would indeed be sur-

* Rom. ii. 6—10.

prising, if men were always determined in their opinions by their understanding; but the generality of mankind are biassed more by their passions, and there is a proneness in the mind of man to Enthusiasm, as all history demonstrates. These weak propensities in man will account for the means of conversion which Methodists have chosen, and for their success. They slight and undervalue our reason and understanding, or they endeavour to lull them asleep by a rapid succession of incoherent quotations, and by confident assertions that they preach the same doctrine with Scripture and the Church. Their great dependance is on tales of experience, and on alternately terrifying and soothing the passions. By these means they are almost certain of gaining a man over at last, if they can but prevent the too early intrusion of a disposition to try and prove their doctrines.

But though Methodists dislike and avoid close argument, yet they are reduced to use some sort of argument, rather than give up all appearances in the world. Even of this they would be destitute, if they did not take advantage of the ambiguity of words. Like the antient Heathen Mystics, they have a double language and doctrine, which they use either in an exoteric or esoteric (that is, in an open or a hidden) sense, according as it answers their purpose. With the open doctrine they attempt to ward off the attacks of their adversaries, and to give an answer to those who ask them a reason for their opinions; but the secret doctrine, though it may be collected from a perusal of some of their works, or from their own confession by a person already acquainted with it, yet is reserved as much as possible for the initiated. To let their adversaries and serious enquirers know in a fair and candid manner, in what a deep sense they understand all the words used in the argument, would entirely disappoint their views; for what they may prove to be exoterically true, will almost always be esoterically false

false or ridiculous. As an instance of this double sense, let us suppose them repelling the general charge—that their doctrines are unchristian and absurd, they will probably exclaim in such words as these; — “ Why, what is our doctrine? Is it not in every respect agreeable to scripture and reason? Do we not teach that men should love God with all their strength, and their neighbour as themselves? Do we not teach the necessity of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Do we not teach that Repentance, Justification, Sanctification, Holiness, &c. &c. are all attainable and necessary in this world? This is the sum of our doctrine, and has not Christ and his Apostles taught the same? Yea, and is it not your own, unless you chuse to deny the Scripture and the church, and are self-condemned?” The open doctrine, contained in all these questions, is unexceptionable; but their farther deep and hidden sense is the most visionary and unparalleled mysticism. Thus, we are desired to love God with all our might, but it does not follow from this, nor is it true, that we must in this world see, hear, taste, and feel him by spiritual senses, and have an intuitive knowledge of his attributes. We are desired to love our neighbour as ourselves, but it does not follow from this, nor is it true, that we can have no such thing as love for our neighbour until we first obtain a direct experience of God. We are desired to have faith in Christ, and are assured that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; but it does not follow from this, nor is it true, that Faith is an immediate knowledge by spiritual senses, and that we are reprobates and belong to the Devil, if we have not as direct a witness of Christ and of the Holy Spirit by those senses, as our natural senses can give us of corporeal objects. We are exhorted to repentance, and warned of its necessity; but it does not follow from this, nor is it true,

true, that repentance is nothing more nor less than a supernatural conviction of the wrath of God. We are assured of the forgiveness of our sins, through the merits of Christ, on condition of our faith and repentance, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance; but it does not follow from this, nor is it true, that God justifies those who are all ungodly and unholy, on no other condition but their knowing their justification. We are desired to follow holiness, as we would expect to see God; but it does not follow from this, nor is it true that all our endeavours to be holy avail nothing without a direct spiritual sight of God and of his favour, and that holiness in perfection, by means of this experience, is the condition of our final acceptance.

Methodists have other ways of supporting their hidden doctrine by exoteric arguments. One in particular is to quote such of their own writings or sayings as are allowed to be rational. This mode of defence proves nothing but their own inconsistency, while they chuse to retain their esoteric doctrine. The purpose which it is designed to answer is, to draw our attention aside from a fair view of the question. What sort of faith must they have in their hidden doctrine, when they justify it by arguments which they themselves know to be superficial? Or though they were ever so confident and zealous in the profession of it, and deemed it of ever so much importance, they should scorn to support truth with sophistry; and if they could contend for truth by no other means, they should leave the advancement of it to the providence of God.

When this fallacious mode of reasoning is exposed, as a last resource, they call you a natural man, who can neither judge truly nor reason justly concerning divine things; for as you have not spiritual senses, you must be altogether blind to the nature of true Religion, and to the doctrines of Christia-
nity.

nity. This defence is an acknowledgment that they argue only to amuse and not to convince; for how can they pretend to persuade and convince persons who have no means of understanding them—who they say can have no better idea of their deep argument than a man born blind can have of the nature of colours. Perhaps they would not insist on this principle if they saw the consequences deducible from it. According to it, man without spiritual senses is not an accountable being, nor a moral agent; for if, without them, he cannot have the least knowledge of true Religion and Christianity, he cannot have the least knowledge of any thing being contrary to them. In a moral sense, no one can disobey a command or neglect a duty, of the nature of which he has not faculties to afford him the least conception. Whoever therefore wants these faculties, is no more answerable for any of his actions, than if he were a brute or a vegetable. This unavoidable inference from a false principle militates not only against reason and revelation, but also against their own doctrine, for they teach that men without spiritual senses are not innocent, like brutes, but in a state of damnation.

If Methodists have any other plea for their doctrine, it must appear by this time, that by engaging to refute it, we pledge ourselves to no very difficult undertaking; for the doctrine itself is not to be defended. The experience, which they require and boast of, is such as no man ever enjoyed since the creation. *No man hath seen nor can see God.* While we live in this world, we are limited to the faculties of a natural body,—we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly. Not until the resurrection shall the just obtain spiritual bodies, — — *fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.* Then they shall see God as he is—face to face—they shall know as they are known—and shall like the *Angels behold the face of our Father which is in Heaven.*

Among

Among all the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, mentioned by the Apostles, we do not once find a sight of God, or spiritual senses, or a direct knowledge of Salvation. We do not indeed undertake to prove, that none of the Apostles had a knowledge of the favour of God by immediate Revelation; but we say, if they had, it could not be their faith nor the condition of their Justification; and they no where avow their enjoyment of it^b. The Revelations granted them, of which Scripture gives any account, were for the purpose of enabling them to discharge the office and duties of the Apostleship; and not to inform them privately of their Salvation.

No Church ever professed Mr. W's idea of Faith; nor even any set of Enthusiasts in any age of Christianity until the present. It was the extent of the boast of all former Enthusiasts, that they felt sensibly within them the operation of the Spirit, instructing, strengthening, delighting them.

^b Perhaps we should except that place where St. Stephen says he saw *the Son of man standing at the right hand of God* (Acts vii. 56.) I say perhaps, because his expressions are plainly figurative, calculated to strike the fancy of mortals: for we must have a very mean and confined notion of God to imagine they would convey a just idea of the spiritual sensation of Angels. St. Stephen could not see God as he is not, that is, with a right hand or a left, with body or parts. The passage therefore must have a figurative meaning, and who will undertake to say in what sense the figure is to be understood? It should be considered farther, that the manner of his death was a miraculous occurrence, which attended the propagation of the Gospel, in the person of the first martyr for it. It was probably related as an encouragement to succeeding Martyrs. Whatever was the nature of his vision, it was not his Faith, nor the condition of his Justification; for it did not appear to him until the very close of his life, though he was for some time beforefull of faith, (vi. 5, 8.) and no doubt, also in a state of Salvation.—And if he had not this vision, which is supposed to have given him a direct knowledge of the favour of God, while he had true faith, how can it be pretended that no one now can have faith or be in a state of salvation who does not enjoy the same kind of vision?

The

The Gnostics, the Montanists, the Saints of the Roman Calendar, and the Fanatics of the last century, called themselves the favourites of God, the inspired; and pretended to Visions, Revelations, Miracles—Spiritual Senses were never heard of among them, unless they were used figuratively.

But Methodists have not confined themselves within these inglorious limits. They have burst the bonds, and past the boundaries of nature, have seen with the ken of angels the invisible God, have experienced themselves immersed in his love, and have spiritually felt the whole invisible world, the entire system of things eternal. None but themselves have ever talked at this rate; but what indubitably gains them the Palm from all competitors,—they declare that all this is Faith, which is essential to Salvation.

To such extravagance may men proceed who despise the helm of reason, and constantly provoke their imagination to its utmost stretch. They may even believe that Scripture countenances them in this; for they will never be at a loss for a Gospel to their mind, while they explain it by their Experience. Yet the serious lovers of truth and God's word need not be discouraged. The axe appears laid to the root of superstition in the kingdoms of the earth; and we may be assured, a like fate is preparing for Enthusiasm. — *For every plant which our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up^c.*

^c Matt. xv. 13.

A P P E N D I X:

CONTAINING

Mr. WESLEY'S SERMON

O N

“The Almost Christian.”

A C T S xxvi. 28.

Almost thou persuadest Me to be a Christian.

AND many there are who go *thus far*: ever since the Christian Religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation, who were *almost persuaded to be Christians*. But seeing it avails nothing before God to go *only thus far*, it highly imports us to consider,

First, What is implied in being *almost*,

Secondly, What in being *altogether a Christian*.

I. 1. Now, in the being *almost a Christian*, is implied, first, Heathen Honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially since by Heathen Honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common Heathens expected of one another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught, that they ought not to be unjust; nor take away their neighbour's goods either by robbery or theft: not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat or over-reach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had

had with them : to defraud no man of his right, and if it were possible, to owe no man any thing.

2. Again, the common Heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to Truth as well as to Justice. And accordingly, they not only held him in abomination, who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie ; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And indeed little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort, accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of societies.

3. Yet again, there was a sort of love and assistance which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity, which are performed without any expence or labour ; but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare, the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment ; and in general the giving to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, (in the lowest account of it) Heathen Honesty went, the first thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*.

II. 4. A second thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*, is the having the form of godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ : the having the *outside of a real Christian*. Accordingly the *almost Christian* does nothing which the gospel forbids. He taketh not the name of God in vain : he blesteth and curseth not : he sweareth not at all, but his communication is, Yea, yea ; Nay, nay. He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. He not only avoids all actual Adultery, Fornication, and Uncleanness, but every word or look, that either directly or indirectly tends thereto ; nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from all detraction, back-biting, tale-bearing, evil-speaking, and from *all foolish talking and jesting*, *Ευπαιδία*, a kind of virtue in the Heathen Moralists account. Briefly from all conversation that is not good to the use of edifying, and that consequently grieves the holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

5. He abstains from *Wine wherein is excess*, from revellings and gluttony. He avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And if he suffers wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. He is no railer, nor brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. He does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man, but in all things acts and speaks by that plain rule, *Whatsoever thou wouldest not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another*.

6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some in spite of toil or pain. *Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with all his might*: whether it be for his friends or for his enemies, for the evil, or for the good. For, being, not *slothful* in this, or in any *Business*, as he hath opportunity he doeth good, all manner of good to all men: and to their souls as well as to their bodies. He reproves the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. He labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God hath already awakened, to the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness, that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

7. He that hath the form of godliness, uses all the means of grace, yea all of them and at all opportunities. He constantly frequents the house of God; and that not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold or costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress; and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all pretensions to the form, as well as to the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation: who come into his house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may seem to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what they are entering upon: who, during that awful service, are either asleep, or inclined in the most convenient posture for it; or as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment. Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No, he who has even this, behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of that solemn service. More especially when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else but *God be merciful to me a sinner*.

8. To this if we add, the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour: he who uniformly practises this outward religion, he has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being *almost a Christian*, and that is, *Sincerity*.

(III.) 9. By Sincerity I mean a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow; and indeed, if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty: no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a *Heathen, Epicurean Poet*. Even this poor wretch in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

Oderunt

* *Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore ;
Oderunt peccare mali, formidine pœnæ.*

So that if a man only abstains from doing evil, in order to avoid punishment,

† *Non pascēs in cruce corvos,*

Saith the Pagan ; there, *Thou hast thy reward.* But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this, to be so much as a *good Heathen*. If then any man from the same motive, viz. to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good, yea, and use all means of grace ; yet we could not with any propriety say, this man is even *almost a Christian*. If he has no better principles in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity therefore is necessarily applied in the being *almost a Christian* : a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will : it is necessarily implied that a man have a sincere view of God in all things : in all his conversation : in all his actions ; in all he does or leaves undone. This design, if a man be *almost a Christian*, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be required, Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and nevertheless be *only almost a Christian* ? What more than this can be implied in the being a *Christian altogether* ? I answer, first, That it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but *almost a Christian*, I learn not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

12. Brethren, great is *my boldness towards you in this behalf.* And *forgive me this wrong*, if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for yours and the gospel's sake. Suffer me then to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased so ye may be exalted, and yet to be more vile, for the glory of my Lord.

13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place † can testify. Using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence. Redeeming the time, buying up every opportunity of doing good to all men ; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace : endeavouring after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times and in all places ; and God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity ; having a real design to serve God, a hearty desire

* Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue ; wicked men avoid sin from the fear of punishment.

† Thou shalt not be hanged.

‡ The University of Oxford.

to do his will in all things, to please him who hath called me to fight the good fight, and to lay hold of eternal Life. Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but *almost a Christian*.

II. If it be required what more than this is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*? I answer,

1. First, the love of God. For thus saith his word, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength*: such a love of God is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually *rejoiceth in God his Saviour*. His delight is in the Lord his Lord and his all, to whom in every thing he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name. His heart is ever crying out, *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee*. Indeed what can he desire beside God? Not the world, nor the things of the world, for he is crucified to the world and the world crucified to him. He is crucified to the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind. For *love is not puffed up*; but he that dwelleth in love, *dwelleth in God, and God in him*; he is less than nothing in his own eyes.

2. The second thing implied in the being *altogether a Christian* is, the love of our neighbour, for thus said our Lord in the following words, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. If any man ask, who is my neighbour? we reply, Every man in the world; every child of him, who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies, or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself; yea, *as Christ loved us*. He that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider St. Paul's description of it. *It is long-suffering and kind. It is not puffed up, but maketh him that loves, the least, the servant of all. Love doth not behave itself unseemly, but becometh all things to all men. She seeketh not her own, but only the good of others, that they may be saved. Love is not provoked: it casteth out wrath, which he who hath, is not made perfect in love. It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*.

3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot be actually separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*: and that is the ground of all, even FAITH. Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. *Every one, saith the beloved disciple, that believeth, is born of God. To as many as received him*

gave

gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith. Yea, our Lord himself declares, He that believeth in the Son, hath everlasting life: and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

4. "But here let no man deceive his own soul*. It is diligently to be noted, the Faith which bringeth not forth repentance and love, and all good works, is not that right living Faith which is here spoken of, but a dead and devilish one. For even the devils believe, that Christ was born of a virgin, that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself very God; that for our sakes he suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting: that he rose again the third day; that he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and at the end of the world shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. These articles of our Faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testaments. And yet for all this Faith they be but devils. They remain still in their damnable estate, lacking the very true Christian Faith."

5. "The right and true Christian Faith is, (to go on in the words of our own church) not only to believe that holy scripture, and the articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. "It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath with God, that by the merits of Christ his sins *are* forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God,—whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

6. Now, whosoever has this faith, which *purifies the heart* by the power of God, who *dwelleth therein*, from pride, anger, desire, from all *unrighteousness*, from all *filthiness of flesh and spirit*, which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind: love that doth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict; whosoever has *this Faith thus working by love*, is not almost only, but altogether a Christian.

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God, before whom *hell and destruction are without a covering*; how much more the hearts of children of men! That each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number? Do I so far practice justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of Heathen honesty direct? Have I the form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil, from whatsoever is forbidden in the written word of God? Do I, whatever good

my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And is all this done with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?"

8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far? That you have not been even *almost a Christian*? That you have not come up to the standard of Heathen honesty? At least, not to the form of christian godliness? Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did, should be *done in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and as such, should be a *spiritual sacrifice to God through Christ*.

9. But supposing you had, Do good desires and good designs make you a Christian? By no means; unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved, saith one, with good intentions." The great question of all then still remains, Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God and my all?" Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, that he who loves God, loves his brother also? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? As Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved *thee*, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away *thy* sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea? That he hath blotted out the hand-writing that was against *thee*, taking it out of the way nailing it to his cross? Hast *thou* indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of *thy* sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with *thy* spirit that thou art a child of God?

10. The God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake then thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God: call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he *makes his goodness pass before thee*, till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. Let no man persuade thee by vain words, to rest short of the prize of thy high calling. But cry unto him day and night, who *while we were without strength died for the ungodly*, until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say. "My Lord and my God." Remember *always to pray and not to faint*, till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and

and ever, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

11. May we all thus experience what it is to be not almost only, but altogether a Christian! Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us!



F I N I S

